# the PARIS REVIEW

23

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an interview

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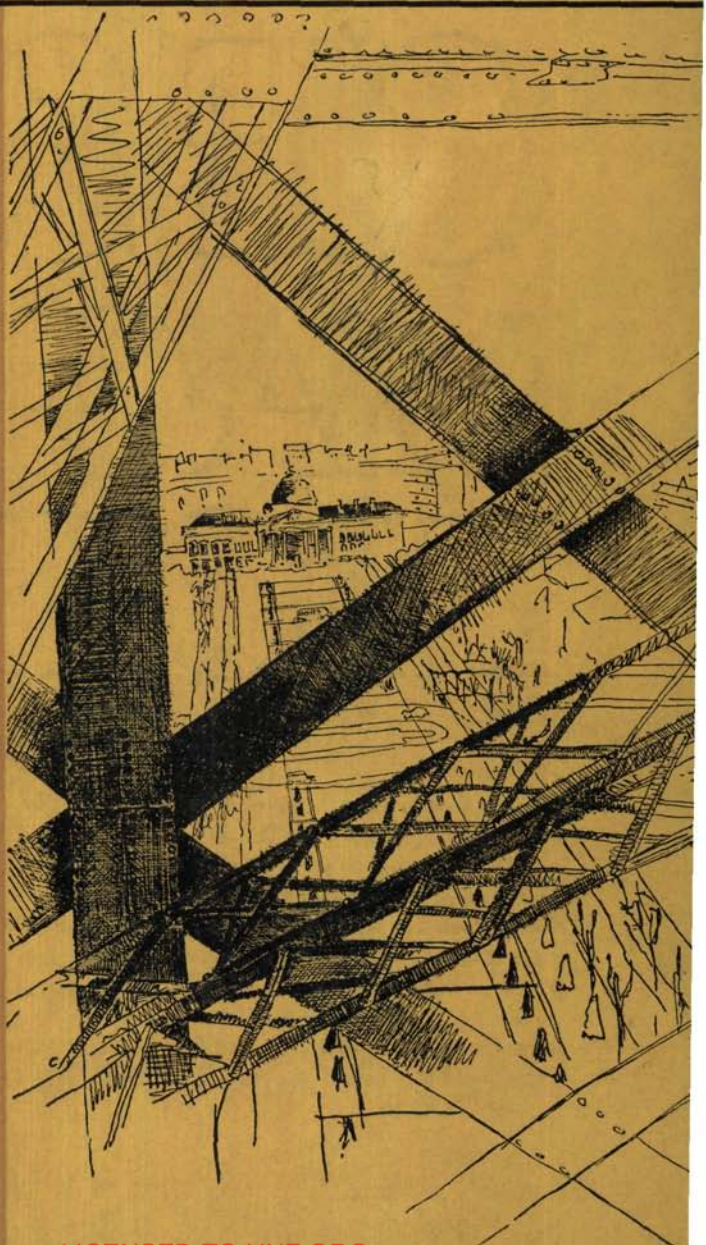

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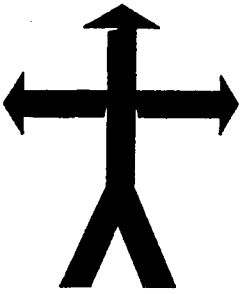

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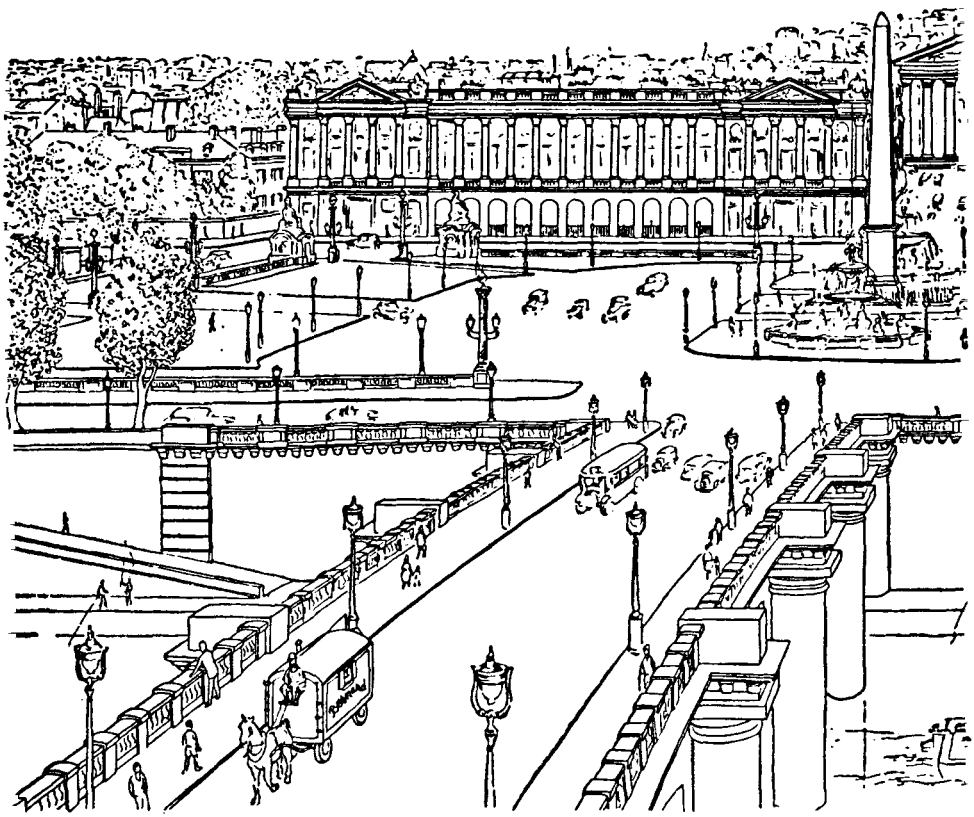

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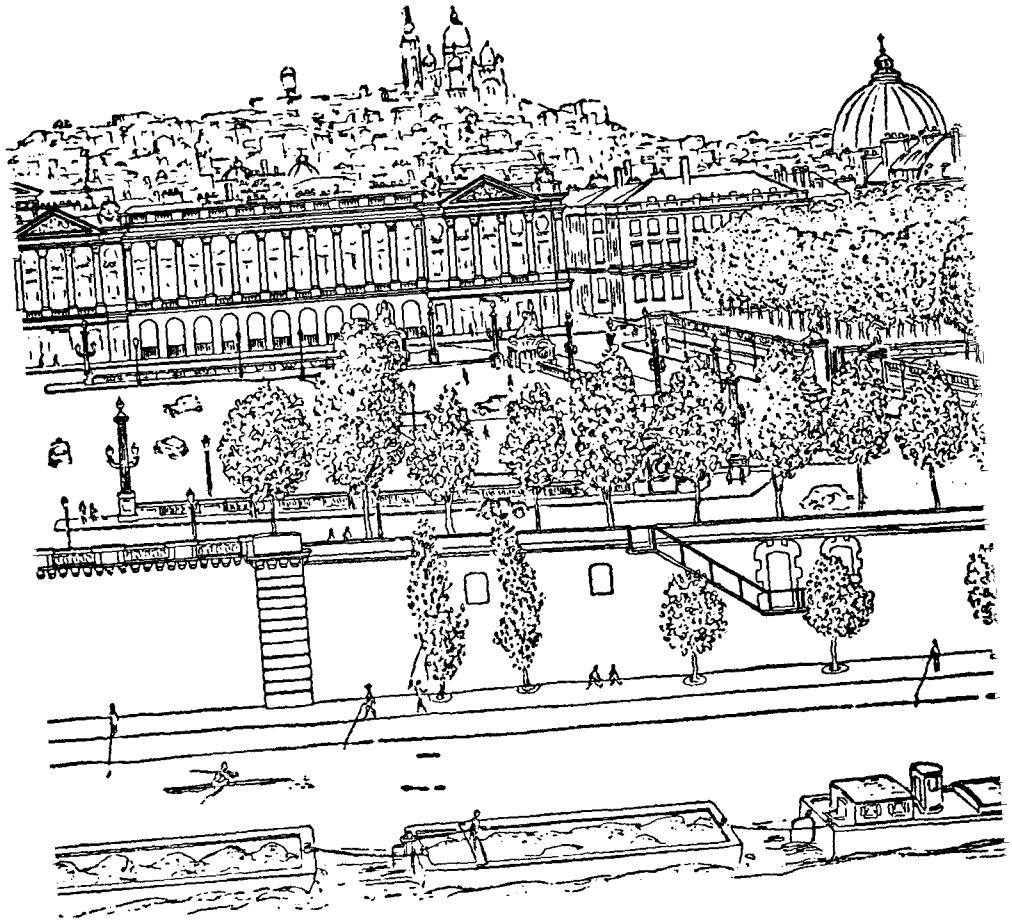

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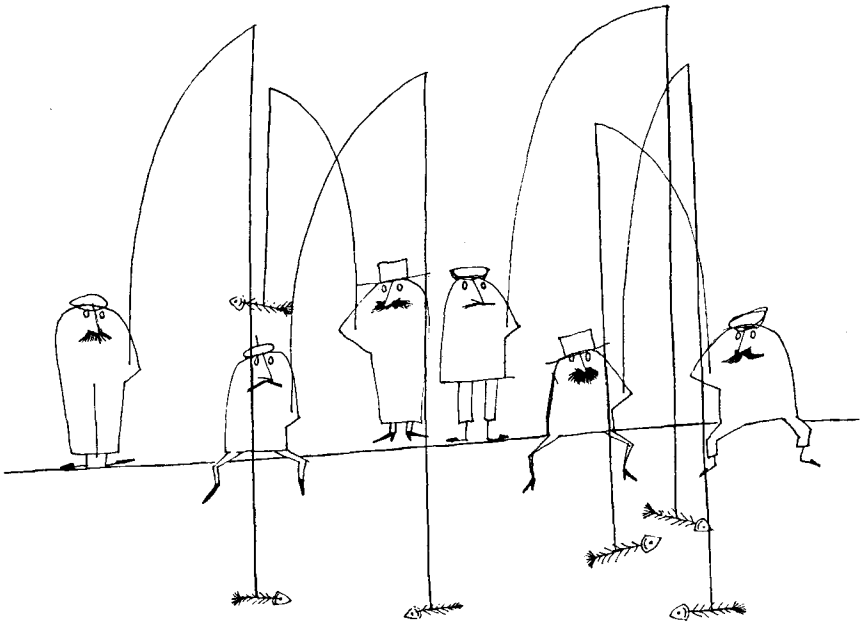

# NUMBER TWENTY-THREE


**FICTION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Max Steele** | *What To Do Till The Postman Comes* | 13 |
| **Jan Gerhard Toonder** | *The Angels Come Too Seldom* | 28 |
| **Charles G. Finney** | *Turtles In The Grass Alas* | 37 |

**INTERVIEW**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Aldous Huxley** | *The Art of Fiction XXIV* | 57 |

**PORTFOLIO**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Pierre Soulages** | *7 drawings* | 49 |

**CHRONICLE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Harvey Breit** | *Malcolm Lowry* | 84 |
| **Malcolm Lowry** | *Through the Panama* | 87 |


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## POETRY


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Louis Simpson** | *Walt Whitman at Bear Mountain* | 26 |
| **Donald Petersen** | *Autumn Complaint* | 35 |
| **Jenny Joseph** | *Birthday Poem* | 44 |
| **William Stafford** | *What God Used For Eyes Before We Came* | 45 |
| **Richard Lyons** | *Landscape* | 46 |
| **Arthur Freeman** | *New England Mills* | 47 |
| **Moore Moran** | *Horseman, 5 : 14* | 81 |
| **Paul Carroll** | *De Medici Slot Machine* | 82 |
| **W. G. van Keuren** | *La Señora Norteamericana* | 83 |
| **Lawrence Lieberman** | *Men of War* | 164 |


*(Cover by Robin Middleton, Frontispiece by William Pène du Bois, Contents page by Hans Beck)*

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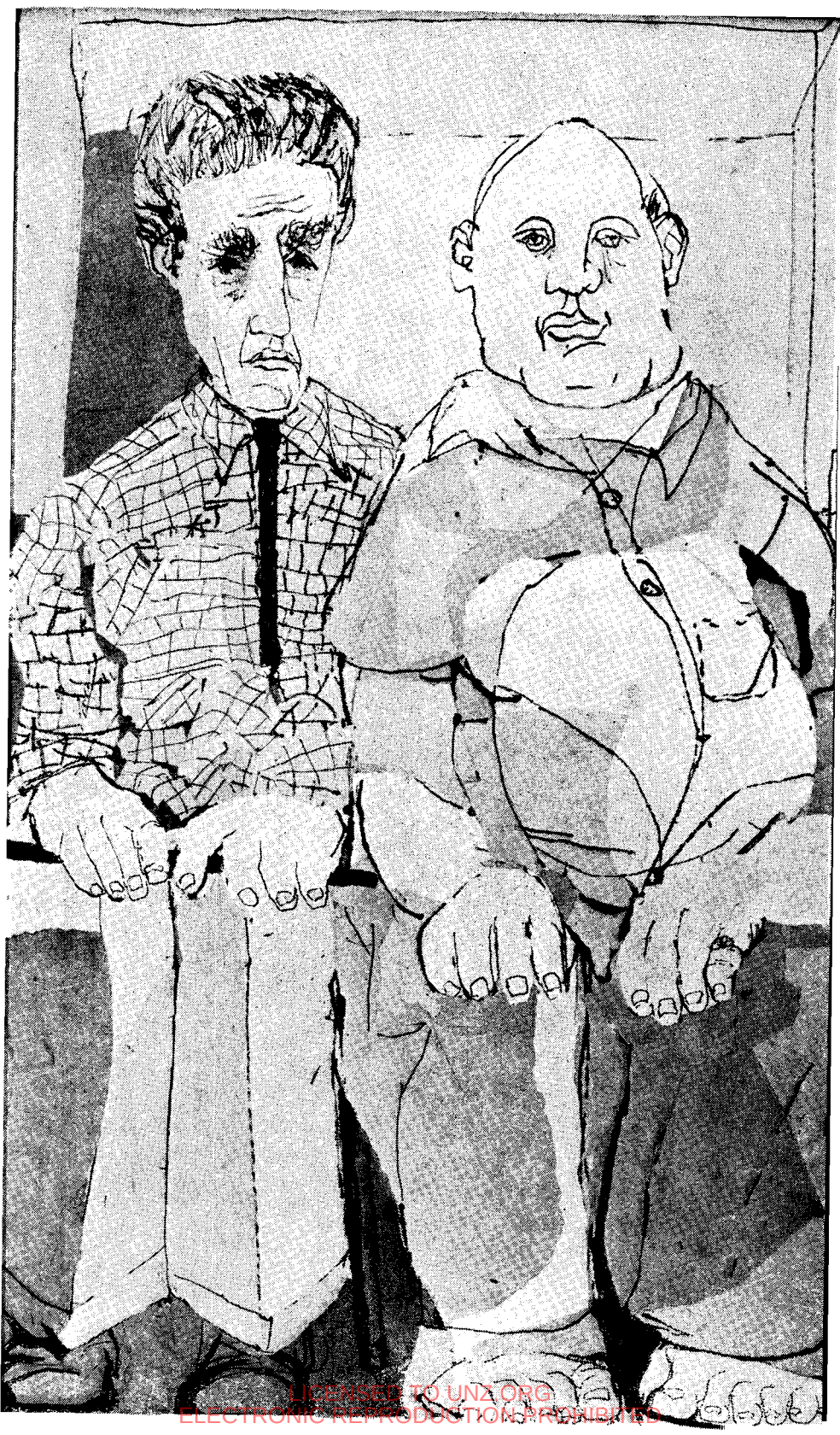

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MAX STEELE

# WHAT TO DO TILL THE POSTMAN COMES

THE two old men met early each afternoon on the pleasant wide porch and waited for the postman. The porch faced the park, the water and the afternoon sun. There were glass jalousie windows which could be rolled shut when the winter wind came up across the Tampa Bay.

The two old men, Mr. Beattle who had been a professor and Mr. Kelley, a retired manufacturer, were as different in character as one could imagine; and yet this was the time of day they both waited for all morning. It was a time of easy comradeship, free from solitude, and safe from the inquistion of strangers who had no notion of privacy. There was, too, and more important, the possibility of mail.

"No, I haven't seen him yet." Mr. Beattle was seated in the light aluminum chair, his walking stick laid precisely across the arms, his feet in their highly polished black shoes and wool-rib socks placed side by side in a spot of sun that warmed the green sisal rug.

Mr. Kelley, breathing heavily, was coming up the three low steps. He pushed opened the glass door. "I thought I heard him."

There was no need to comment on this and Mr. Beattle, who was from Virginia, remained silent in his tidewater way.

It was Mr. Beattle's impressive head that was a surprise each day to Mr. Kelley. Beattle had the sort of thick gray and sandy blonde hair that stayed combed but nevertheless stood up and away from his head. With his shaggy eyebrows it gave him a leonine aspect and great dignity. He had practically no cheekbones so that there were slanting hollows

*—Drawing by Roger Barr*

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from his deepset eyes to his strong jaw. His teeth, too, in spite of their stains, still showed strong, and added to the vigorous feline countenance.

His body, though, was thin. In winter, when he wore his tweeds, he had the bearing of a large man; but now in the early fall with his sport shirt and narrow knit tie, he was plainly thin and old. Kelley often wondered if Mr. Beattle ate enough.

It was plain to anyone that Kelley had eaten enough all his life. His florid face sagged with weight; and folds of fat hung from his jawbones and swayed when he moved his head. His stomach was enormous and had the padded appearance his grandchildren liked to imitate with sofa cushions. His voice rolled in the deep, hearty manner of many fat men and made Mr. Beattle look smaller, as though he were shrinking to escape the voice which reverberated in the glass sunporch.

"Mr. Beattle," he said, "the sun's still hot."

Mr. Beattle nodded that that was true.

Mr. Kelley let the door close behind him and lowered his weight onto the green web of the aluminum chaise longue. His seersucker shirt was transparent where it stuck to his pink breasts and his green putter-trousers were as wrinkled as pajamas. He wore sandals and no socks. There were days, Beattle was sure, when Mr. Kelley tried to look as repulsive as possible.

On such days, Beattle had further noticed, Mr. Kelley was inclined to make personal remarks.

"Mr. Beattle," he said between breaths, "I don't see how you stand those wool trousers."

With his grey-haired fingers, the yellowed nails pared round and close, Beattle pinched the seams of his worsted flannels at the knees. He was inclined to say that he found them comfortable and was accustomed to them, but that would only open the way for more remarks from Mr. Kelley in his present mood.

When Mr. Beattle said nothing, Kelley watched him shrewdly out of the corner of his eye. He tried again: "Don't you sweat?"

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Beattle was certain now that this was a bad day for Mr. Kelley. Even though the question was direct, he chose not to answer.

It was a bad time for Mr. Kelley. For three days he had had no mail. Yesterday he had walked straight from the porch to the Korner Store and had bought things that were not on his list: shrimp creole, poppyseed rolls, French Alsatian wine, a pint of ice cream, four different kinds of candy bars, and promising himself that he would portion these things out to himself over a two-week period, he'd gone home and eaten them all before midnight.

Twice he had awakened during the night with indigestion. This morning he felt not only fat but completely without character and had thought, as Beattle surmised: "To hell with socks. If I'm going to eat like one, I may as well look like one."

When Beattle had waited long enough for the porch to echo with the brashness of the question about his sweat glands, he said, "It is warm today."

Kelley was disgusted with the cautious words. "Why does he have to weigh a damned statement like that? I'm not going to write it down and footnote it."

Beattle was thinking: "Lead him from the personal to the general."

"I sweat," Mr. Kelley said. "I imagine I sweat close to half-gallon a day."

"That's 64 ounces," Mr. Beattle said, not really sure.

"Just about," Mr. Kelley said. "I won't miss it far." He could tell from the tightness about Mr. Beattle's mouth the exact degree to which he was annoying the man. He, himself, did not like to talk about perspiration and odors; and he respected and admired Mr. Beattle's sense of propriety. Yet, in his present mood, he felt it was good for Mr. Beattle to be offended a little every day. He made a great display now of wiping the creases of his neck and mopping the top of his brown, bald head and even the fringe of his white, curly hair. He stuffed his unironed handkerchief into the side pocket of his putter-pants.

Mr. Beattle, without glancing away from the bay, arranged

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his black knit tie so that it fell exactly down the center of his checked shirt.

"You haven't seen him yet?" Mr. Kelley remarked again about the postman.

"He'll probably be late today," Mr. Beattle said. "It still being close to the first of the month."

Neither of them spoke or glanced quickly at the other expecting conversation. They were settling now, by mutual, habitual agreement, into that period of silence that lasted sometimes twenty minutes, sometimes an hour, in which they looked out across the green park, at the old people sitting in the sun, or moving slowly with their canes or with their arms clasped to each other for support, along the curving walks, in and out of the sun under the feathery mimosas and the palm fronds which rattled in the constant breeze. Beyond were the yachts in the basin, their tall masts swaying slowly, and the younger men running up and down the wooden docks with buckets and sponges and hoses, calling to each other in the reserved way that people have about boats that are tied up, and calling to and giving orders to the few youngsters who, naked except for shorts and sneakers, jumped from dock to boatdeck, shouting in higher voices. And over them and over the bay which lay beyond the boat slips, the seagulls whirled and circled and dived, screeching in their shrill calls which imitated laughter.

From his desk at the double-window above the porch, Beattle could view the same scene and even the buoy markers with an indolent pelican on each. But when he was in his apartment he rarely looked down at the boulevard and the park and the sea. In the morning he would glance out at the sky but not to see the clearness of the blue or the shaping of the sea clouds, but to determine what sort of clothes to wear that day. Even during this quiet time with Mr. Kelley, he would watch the people only for awhile and then he would read articles and extracts from his academic journals.

Kelley, who had a cottage in the back with a picture window that faced a gravelled patio, a sterile banana tree, and a pink stucco wall, surveyed the scene from the porch

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with immense satisfaction, as though he had arranged it all and was quite pleased with the composition and especially with the line made by the red acacias which bordered the walks.

Sometimes Kelley counted the old people in the park and estimated how much they spent each month and figured in his head how much principal was necessary to yield that monthly income. It pleased him to know that he was surrounded by that many enterprising, conservative, prosperous people, many who, like himself, had started in business in really a very modest way and had been able to hand over to their children quite prospering concerns. His three sons, for instance, the youngest not yet fifty, could all three retire tomorrow if necessary.

Sometimes he counted the boats through one window only and figured the capital tied up at that one wooden dock. They represented to him a different sort of wealth and one of which he did not completely approve, even though twice, years ago, he himself had priced boats in showrooms and had escaped only by saying: "Let me phone you back in the morning." The boats would be bought by his sons or grandsons. He, himself, was too aware of money to spend it so freely. His slight feeling of disapproval was not enough to keep him from enjoying the sight of the full sails as a boat slid out into the bay, tipped, came about, and gathering the full force of the breeze, skimmed toward the horizon.

Beattle stirred in his chair. The silence, having begun after a rather strained conversation, was not as comfortable as he ordinarily found it, and he wanted to show his equanimity by asking Mr. Kelley a question about the trading on yesterday's market which he was sure to find pleasure in explaining. But judging from Mr. Kelley's hands, curled and relaxed on his stomach, he decided that Mr. Kelley was absorbed in his own thoughts and not troubled by, if indeed he had noticed it, Beattle's early annoyance.

Beattle, too, looked back at the park and played his game. He liked to see it for a few minutes each day as a different painter would see it. He had begun the month before with

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the obvious choice of Cézanne. He had worked his way through the French Impressionists and then had searched backwards through Watteau and the English and now was seeing it as Rembrandt might. He squinted his eyes till only the white sail shone brilliantly against the dark sea, and then opened them wide enough to catch lesser lights from a cloud, a watertank and the topdeck of another boat. He, too, had a feeling of gratification.

Being of a more contemplative mind than Kelly, he realized that the peaceful feeling came, not from the scene itself, but from the usually easy, uncompromising comradeship on the porch. Both of the men respected privacy and both of them had had in their winters here the disquieting experience of making acquaintances too hastily, from fear of loneliness, with people who not only did not revere privacy but who actually did not know that the need existed. As a result, both of them were sensitive to encroachments, their own and others.

Kelley, in one of his first winters here, had generously left his doors open so that his neighbors could come in without being invited, for a drink or to watch his T.V. which was one of the first sets in the city. One evening he had glanced about his livingroom-terrace and seen eleven people, three of whom he knew only by name, gazing at, fascinated by, a loud and senseless T.V. program. He had studied each of the dimly lighted, expressionless faces and asked: "Do I really like that person?" "Do I want to know him better?" Then he had asked the decisive question, feeling he had earned a right to a certain degree of selectivity: "Would I know that person back home?" The answer in nine of the cases was "no." At that moment the two to whom he would have said "yes," a frail little lady and her husband, an old lawyer from Vermont with snowy hair and brows moved toward him, touched his hand and whispered, "Don't, don't" when Kelley started to rise. The lawyer had waved toward the T.V. set: "I don't understand all this." At the beginning of the gravel drive he clasped Kelley's hand. "Maybe we can talk some evening." But Kelley was never free in the evening to visit.

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By the end of the winter he hated the evenings and the people who arrived by habit and sat in his living room until almost midnight.

After that winter Kelley moved with discretion into a new neighborhood. But even then, two winters ago he had left an old preacher in his cottage and had returned to find the man standing before an open shirt-drawer. The man had not seemed ashamed at being caught or even aware that he had been. He announced: "You have 13 white shirts, 6 colored and 23 sports shirts." Kelley, therefore, respected and even envied the way in which Mr. Beattle, through training and temperament, managed to keep a proper distance.

Beattle, on his part, however, had learned slowly. He had had to break his lease in one house because an old couple there had tried to adopt him. They had insisted that he eat health foods with them at least one meal a day. He could still taste with displeasure the dessert which was invariably a protein marshmallow: dry cottage cheese rolled in wheat germ.

In turn, he had been too bold and enthusiastic in one of his own friendships. He had discovered in a bookstore a retired surgeon who had gone to school in Switzerland and spoke French with a beautiful accent. Later over a cup of mint tea they had continued the animated appraisals of Victor Hugo and Balzac, exchanged names and addresses, and after that he had gone often to the surgeon's to speak French. It was thoroughly delightful to Mr. Beattle and he did not realize that his companion was not as delighted as he until he was stopped one day on the stairway by the gentleman's landlady and told that the old surgeon was asleep and was not to be disturbed in the afternoons.

After that when they met, less often and by accident, they still had lively discussions, but Mr. Beattle could not enter into them with the same eagerness as before and was always somewhat apologetic toward the surgeon. The doctor was also apologetic: "I must rest a great deal because of this condition. But there's nothing to prevent us from having dinner together, is there?" The invitations and acceptances

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remained tenuous; and even when he read in the paper a notice of the surgeon's death, he could not believe wholeheartedly in the "condition" and still felt rebuffed.

Somewhat inadvertently the same thing had happened between Beattle and Kelley. In their early days on the porch the year before, they had talked a great deal about general topics and enough about private ones to give each a feeling of security and to satisfy a natural curiosity before it could exceed itself.

Beattle, for instance, knew that Mr. Kelley had made a comfortable fortune manufacturing metal office furniture, that his oldest son and son-in-law were managing the firm, that Mr. Kelley had been warned by his doctors to retire and to lose a considerable amount of weight which he had been unable to do. Until her death twelve years ago, his wife had watched his diet and weight for him. He had always travelled a great deal, in North America, and always stayed at the best hotels and eaten the best that was offered. His cottage and patio in the back cost four times as much as Mr. Beattle's upstairs efficiency apartment and yet he felt that he was doing himself an injustice by not buying a house on the Inland Waterway, on the other coast, somewhere above Ft. Lauderdale.

Kelley knew less about Mr. Beattle. He knew the man had never married, had previously lived with a sister and her family in a small university town where the brother-in-law was connected with the business part of the school, and that Mr. Beattle had never been head of the department and was, he could not hide the fact from Mr. Kelley who understood the necessity of promotions, in retrospect a little bitter. Kelley did not know and could not determine, but would not approach the subject even obliquely, what exactly Mr. Beattle used for money. He had written to his daughter and asked at the reference room of the library and had gathered that the retirement pay for an associate professor would be very small, less, for instance than he himself payed in rent for the little cottage.

The incident which determined the limit of their relation-

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ship had not occurred on the porch; and neither of the men could have, at the moment, recalled or recognized it. It was almost nothing at all. One day last fall, Mr. Kelley had told Mr. Beattle that later in the afternoon his car, a two year old Cadillac, which had been in storage, would be checked thoroughly and brought to him. He had been rather pleased and said, "We won't have to depend on taxis now."

Mr. Beattle said that would be nice indeed, not realizing that he was included in the "we" since he never called cabs.

That evening he had been pressing a pair of trousers when there was a series of knocks on the door. He had only time to hide the iron in the oven and push the ironing board behind the bookcase so that it could not be seen from the entrance way, when the knocks sounded again and Mr. Kelley's deep voice calling: "Mr. Beattle!"

When he opened the door, Mr. Kelley was breathing heavily but managed to say that the car was out on the street, to come, they would go to an uptown bar together. Mr. Beattle was intent on sniffing the air for the smell of scorched wool and stared at Mr. Kelley blankly. Mr. Kelley had repeated the invitation. Mr. Beattle had thought to himself: "Two dollars for a round and then I'll have to buy him a drink and that'll be my groceries for almost two days." He had declined.

Kelley had gone down the steps, holding to the banisters with both hands, thinking of people he could and should have asked. After all, he and Mr. Beattle were merely porch-acquaintances through necessity. "Still, he could have asked me in." He held to the newel post. "At least till I could get my breath." By the time he reached his car he had thought of a couple he knew who would appreciate a ride along the bay shore and had forgot Mr. Beattle. But it never occurred to him to ask him anywhere again.

Beattle, on his side, did not feel that he could afford any sort of entertainment. Once every three weeks he bought a fifth of Bourbon and had one drink a day, not before dinner, but in the middle of the evening when he knew that if he did not talk to someone he might go insane. Usually he

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would talk, then, to himself, sometimes in French, sometimes in English, rarely in both. About twice a year he would go on to a second and third drink and finish an entire pint or more. On such occasions he would sing French student songs and dance with a chair and fall finally across the bed giggling and sleep with his clothes on. The next day he would smile fondly at the image of himself dancing and sleeping with his clothes on.

"There he is!" Kelley sat upright in the chaise longue. The postman's shrill whistle could be heard intermittently far up the boulevard. He had still to come to the corner, go up and down the one-way sidestreet, before arriving; but the first sound of his whistle was always the cue for the two men on the porch to begin talking again.

On the other porches other people were gathering. An old man in the park stopped, still bent, lifted his head, and listened. When the whistle blew again, he turned about on his cane in a small half-circle and in tiny scraping steps headed back toward the houses, stopping to listen and to rest and to wipe his forehand with a folded handkerchief from his breast pocket. Soon the park was empty. Only one woman in a crocheted hat dozed on a bench in the sun, her dark glasses slipping down on her sharp nose, her cat on a chain, crouching watching a bird.

"I won't get anything today," Mr. Beattle said. One of them and sometimes both of them felt compelled to make the statement everyday. It was a charm that brought them luck. Then they could be surprised or feign an indifference to hide their disappointment.

"I should," Mr. Kelley said. "I haven't had any in four days. Not even a postcard."

The whistle was sharper now and more frequent. They tried not to pause when it blew, but in spite of their efforts it punctuated their conversation which became more and more animated.

"Still I have to wait," Mr. Beattle said. "Even when I know there's nothing."

Neither of them would use the expression which was heard

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everywhere that old people gathered: on the benches, in the grocery, at the laundry-store, in the Post Office, the park and at the barbershop: "It gives me something to do."

"I wish he would come early and get it over with," Mr. Kelley said. "I sleep as late as possible." He had never admitted this before; he listened to the whistle near the corner and went on: "If I wake before six, I take another sleeping pill. Generally I can sleep till after ten."

"I wake at seven every morning," Mr. Beattle said. He'd always had nine o'clock classes.

"Seven!" Mr. Kelley said in admiration and pity. "What do you find to do all morning?" He had not meant to ask and his voice dropped on the word "morning" as though he were trying to negate the question.

Mr. Beattle seemed glad to answer. At least he spoke quickly: "Read. I read." He did not want to say that he swept, and dusted, and dusted his books, and once a week cleaned his typewriter, and cooked lunch and brushed his clothes and spot-cleaned them with damp cloths and napthas and pressed his drip-dry shirts. All these things he felt would be admitting poverty and Mr. Kelley, with his maid who came twice a week, would think them beneath a man's dignity. "And do research," he said, a little pompously.

The word "research" and the tone annoyed Mr. Kelley and again he felt the need to offend Mr. Beattle. "I stay in bed as long as possible. Then I get up." Kelley waited for the postman's whistle which was on the sidestreet now. "And stand naked in front of the mirror. Sometimes I even pull up a chair and sit naked in front of it for fifteen or twenty minutes."

Mr. Beattle rolled his cane along the arms of the chair and glanced uncomfortably at Mr. Kelley.

"It keeps me from getting off my diet," Mr. Kelley said, gratified at having roused Mr. Beattle, "then I make my shower last as long as I can." The postman blew again, only three houses away. "Breakfast takes me over an hour with the paper and my coffee."

The postman was too near for conversation. Again, by

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agreement, they sank back into a silence. Mr. Beattle continued to roll his cane up and down the chair arms. Mr. Kelley rebuttoned two buttons on his shirt. The postman blew again and came up their walk and was now on their steps. He called out the mail as he sorted it between his fingers and dropped it into the five boxes under the awning. "Mr. Beattle, Dr. Beattle, Mr. Kelley, Mrs. McGuire, Mr. Johnston, Dr. Beattle, Mr. Thackston..."

"Thackston's moved!" Kelley said.

"Right." The postman picked the letter out of the box. "McGuire and Johnston and that's all." He swung his leather bag back over his hip and started down the steps.

"That's all?" Mr. Kelley asked.

"What're you complaining about," the postman called from the walk. "You got one."

Mr. Beattle already standing was trying not to seem hasty.

"Did I get something?" Mr. Kelley asked.

"He called your name," Mr. Beattle said. He opened the door and stood on the top step picking his letters out.

"Would you hand me mine?" Mr. Kelley asked in a voice that still showed doubt.

Beattle handed him an envelope without glancing at it. Beattle sat down before he began studying his own three pieces. One was from a modern language group and he knew it would be asking for money. One was from a former student who was now teaching and with whom he carried on a regular correspondence even though he could not exactly recall the man's face or appearance or work. The third was a postcard from his sister. He would take them all upstairs and read them over a cup of tea.

Mr. Kelley was plundering his envelope, Beattle noticed, in the way a small boy would open a box of chocolate crackers. Kelley read without glasses, holding the letter some distance away and to one side. He was grinning and once he laughed. "Well, well," he looked up at Beattle as though he were a stranger, "my baby grandson's walking now!"

"That's what babies eventually do, isn't it?" Beattle thought, but immediately censored himself for the envy he

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was feeling. He said nothing and waited for Mr. Kelley to finish his letter.

"Walking!" Mr. Kelley said again. He saw the look with which Mr. Beattle had repressed his feelings. "It's from my daughter-in-law," Mr. Kelley said. He was amused. "She begins: 'There's no news'." He crammed the letter into his pocket with the wadded handkerchief.

"How old is he?" Mr. Beattle asked.

"Ten months. Walking. She says he's been walking for two weeks," Mr. Kelley said. "He was just learning to pull up the last time I saw him. Well..." he said. He looked across the park at the boats in the sun. "I'll have to send him something."

"Shoes perhaps," Mr. Beattle said.

Mr. Kelley laughed but at the same time he thought: "I shouldn't have told him."

"Maybe a little boat," Mr. Kelley said. He thought about it and tried to remember where he had seen a splendid toy boat. He would ask one of the youngsters on the dock. When he thought of the youngsters he remembered their sneakers and that he had seen in the dime store red sneakers for babies, not as long as the width of his hand. "Shoes, that's not a bad idea," he said.

Mr. Beattle felt pleased with himself and no longer envious in the least. He pulled himself up and stood with his cane poised and watched Mr. Kelley seem to spread out in the sun which slanted across the chaise longue.

"Are you going to the grocery?" Mr. Beattle asked. It was, in essence, an invitation since he was standing nearer to the glass door than to the hallway.

"Not today," Mr. Kelley said, folding his hands across his ponderous stomach. "I think I might doze awhile." He watched Mr. Beattle going down the boulevard, swinging his cane in perfect unison with his left leg, and watched the palms swaying in the park, and beyond the park, the masts swaying and the youngsters still jumping from the boats to the docks and back again. He let his eyes close for a moment and could still see the white sails and the seagulls wheeling in the bright sun.

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# WALT WHITMAN
# AT BEAR MOUNTAIN

> *"...life which does not give the preference to any other life, of any previous period, which therefore prefers its own existence..."*
>
> ORTEGA Y GASSET

Neither on horseback nor seated,
But like himself, squarely on two feet,
The poet of death and lilacs
Loafs by the footpath. Even the bronze looks alive
Where it is folded like cloth. And he seems friendly.

"Where is the Mississippi panorama
And the girl who played the piano?
Where are you, Walt?
The Open Road goes to the used-car lot.

"Where is the nation you promised?
These houses built of wood sustain
Colossal snows,
And the light above the street is sick to death.

"As for the people—see how they neglect you!
Only a poet pauses to read the inscription."

"I am here," he answered.
"It seems you have found me out.
Yet, did I not warn you that it was Myself
I advertized? Were my words not sufficiently plain?

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"I gave no prescriptions,
And those who have taken my moods for prophecies
Mistake the matter."
Then, vastly amused—"Why do you reproach me?
I freely confess I am wholly disreputable.
Yet I am happy, because you have found me out."
A crocodile in wrinkled metal loafing...

Then all the realtors,
Pickpockets, salesmen, and the actors performing
Official scenarios,
Turned a deaf ear, for they had contracted
American dreams.

But the man who keeps a store on a lonely road,
And the housewife who knows she's dumb,
And the earth, are relieved.

All that grave weight of America
Cancelled! Like Greece and Rome.
The future in ruins!
The castles, the prisons, the cathedrals
Unbuilding, and roses
Blossoming from the stones that are not there...

The clouds are lifting from the high Sierras,
The Bay mists clearing;
And the angel in the gate, the flowering plum
Dances like Italy, imagining red.

—LOUIS SIMPSON

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Jan Gerhard Toonder

# The Angels Come Too Seldom

Later—much later, when he had been for a long time that full-grown man they'd promised him as child—he still sometimes was caught by that feeling of being followed on a lonely road, sometimes by figures without a name and almost without a form, but mostly just by the eyes. Eyes were waiting then in shadowblack hiding places, like small windows of cellars and peepholes in front-doors and especially behind the meshes of lace-curtains, impenetrable from the outside but giving from the inside a view on the silent road and on him. Never ordinary eyes; never eyes looking without meaning, but forcing, peeping, peering, willing eyes, eyes like double-barrelled guns, like secret weapons, transmitters of vibrations or beams —he didn't know a name for it but it was a force, a will to paralyze and kill. As a full-grown man, he knew that he should laugh at himself for it and proceed calmly without quickening his step, and that he should think about quite different things then—but as a child he didn't know that yet.

It all started when he had to walk home all by himself for the first time after his weekly visit to Aunt: a little boy in the cold twilight of an autumn afternoon, in the silence between the widely separated, stiff and stately houses, and then behind him the windows with the starched lace-curtains with Aunt sitting very near to them to be able to see without being seen over the whole length of Longalley. And he—still a little boy and used to finding a strong and full-grown hand to guide him and to keep him away from loneliness and danger—he knew again suddenly that dark parlor he'd just left, but weirder now, and Aunt, more big and wordless, watching

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him proceed over Longalley; and there he understood for the first time that her eyes were capable of harm because against his back and then creeping up to the inside of his skull he felt the unspoken order to stop, to stand still, stand still halfway up Longalley where there was nobody else and where mist and night and cold were closing in.

That was the first time. Of course, he had always paid his weekly visits to Aunt—he didn't know why he should, his parents insisted on it, perhaps because due to some corruption of names he was named after her—but on those former visits he was brought and fetched by Nurse. Those were safe walks, part of the Highway, School Street, Tillers Road, then Longalley. Sulking, he trudged along then, moody about the prospect of having his afternoon spoiled by that visit, and afterwards on the way back still angrily kicking gravelstones to get rid of the dark pressure of that parlor in which he'd been imprisoned for so long; but he didn't know fear in those days, not even of looking eyes, because Nurse's hand protected him from the power of the world's evil. Her voice was there too, with distracting stories he never listened to yet still remembered. There was the house of the Old Widow. There was the window of the Old Widow. There the Old Widow herself was seated without the cover of lace-curtains; she looked around quietly, she even looked at Tillers Road but she didn't see anything there; she looked quietly at her daughter, that girl of forty who never had been allowed to marry and was embroidering now opposite her, at the second window. And in the house over there the Captain was living, a man who had sailed the high seas and of whom it was told—by Nurse too—that he'd had dealings with black girls and possessed a lot of gold and who had been visited by punishment for his sins and was therefore crooked like a hunchback; he was always standing in his garden, craning his short neck in a constant attempt to raise his head high enough to see the sky. And also on Tillers Road there was the Retired Man of Means, old and rich, his curtains always closed, angry and gloomy and nobody knew what he was doing all day long in the darkness of his room and it wouldn't be any

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good. Further on, the Nice People, always greeting every passer-by; they went to church, brought baskets with food to the sick and old, and always had a comforting word for everyone; but that was, said Nurse, because they suffered so much grief themselves and little boys shouldn't hear about that yet...

No; in that beginning only the visits themselves were fearful, but not really too bad because at the end of that dark hour there was release when Nurse rang the bell and then there was the walk with some sulking, gravel-kicking and listening and at last the free security of their own garden, that in those days always seemed to be very green and flowering and wide. And in that one dark hour nothing happened really; he sat on a low little chair opposite Aunt and nicely answered her questions about his father, mother and brothers; he mostly held up knitting wool for her, kept quiet and small so that she didn't notice him too much, and together with her he looked through the mist of curtains at the silent emptiness of Longalley; he didn't know what *she* was looking for, what she was waiting for, but he looked to see if Nurse wasn't coming yet. It was no worse than that. Only he was always tired afterwards. For some time he couldn't think about anything, not even listen well, only kick; but it wasn't bad yet, for it was always over as soon as he reached their own garden. The bad thing only started when he had to walk there and back all by himself; he was big enough for that now; he knew the way and—so they said—nobody would hurt him.

But the visiting hour was much longer now and there was more darkness in the room, so that the portraits of late relatives became pale ghosts looking out from the walls in the dusk; and Aunt was bigger, it seemed to him that she was assimilating the twilight or the twilight her. She didn't do anything really; she looked at the gray road, at him, at the road, at him, slowly; there was the sound of deep and regular breathing, but gradually she was melting together with the darkness of the room, and her eyes became deeper than they used to be and he felt them every time they touched him—with force, with a greedy groping, a hunger.

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He said dully; "I'll be going now." He had held up the wool, got his candy, told about his parents and brothers. "I'll be going now."

"It's still early," a voice behind the eyes said. The room was gathering darkness.

He was shaking while putting on his coat in the hall; he didn't realize how he did it and he was still adjusting it, buttoned all awry, when he walked outside and there felt suddenly, frightfully, his impulse for kicking and running checked by the will aimed at him, the beams, the suction, the hunger of the eyes behind the window. So it was that he went that first time frightened and fast along Longalley while the order crept up his back to the inside of his skull to become a convulsive willing there; to make him stand still where mist and cold and night would close in on him; and only at the corner of Tillers Road, just before he went out of view from that window and consequently would safely be alone had he the courage to turn around and wave his hand at those eyes behind tight window glass and curtains, as he should.

Safely alone, he thought—but it wasn't true. A barn between him and that far-away window pushed the visit to the past; but here where he'd expected to be free to take a breath and sulk and kick the gravel, he suddenly felt not alone and not safe. He looked around and saw the barn; the hunger that had followed him through the gray twilight over Longalley couldn't reach him here anymore, but yet the sharp bite of danger was behind his forehead again and on his skin was a pressure again and a soft large pain of fear. There was an enemy here too—he didn't know where or who, but it was paralyzing. Here too a force was aimed at him and because he had no defense the only thing to do was to flee, faster and faster and not delaying for any breathing spell and with his eyes kept unwaveringly at the dark surface of the road so as not to expose his most vulnerable spot to the hidden enemy and running at last until, shaking from the effort that had taken him through the poison-area, he reached School Street, where there rode a cart and children played and lamps were lighted in the small shops. He was safe.

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Afterwards, they understood at home why he didn't go to play in the garden; the garden had lost its lustre and lay wintry barren in the evening; a little boy could play better inside but he didn't play and he was pale.

The enemy that had attacked him so unexpectedly on Tillers Road had to be the Retired Man of Means, or somebody—some*thing*, perhaps—in his house; his was the only house with closed curtains, the only one hiding secrets and from where, impenetrable itself, all life on the road could be watched and attacked with invisible forces. He asked who the Retired Man was, and at home they said: the Retired Man, he's an eccentric, an old eccentric; we don't know him really, but didn't Grandfather have something to do with him... friends... or enemies? The family once had something to do with him—well, that's very long ago and the Retired Man retired decades ago to living in that house—you never see him in church either anymore, an old eccentric.

But the lace-curtains were brown-yellow there and they never moved and were drawn over a blackness in which something dwelled and watched and waited. He felt it every time, although he never dared look up; every time when he came fleeing back and just had left the suction of the pursuing hunger in the twilight-alley behind him, he'd meet at the corner, the poison, the invisible, that something driven by hidden eyes, that caught him and penetrated more and more while nearing the silent houses and then still followed him, stinging, until the safety of School Street.

And gradually this enemy grew stronger than the other one, than the force that tried to paralyze him on Longalley; for he learned to resist that one, knew its cause and that knowledge proved to be a defense. He found that he lessened his vulnerability by visualizing Aunt as she was before, as she should be, not filling up the room like a black cloud around the looking-holes of the eyes, but as a fat old woman, staring dully and vacantly and silently at the senseless outer world. That pushed her back, weakened her; he felt that she still resisted furiously and still injected the dark stream through every cleft of thought but to no avail

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any more and he could, exhausted but unhurt, reach the shelter of the barn.

But of what came later, of what dwelled in the blackness behind the curtains of the Retired Man, he had no image and so he had no defense. He could only force himself, walking fast and faster and never looking up, to imagine School Street, stretching out his feeling to the waiting safety; if he had not, even with the smallest success, attained this image before he passed the house, he felt he would be lost.

At home they put away his adventure-books. They were worried because he was often pale and listless. But of course the visits had to continue and he couldn't tell anybody about the horror on the way back. Gradually he got to be troubled on other roads too; he became afraid of all houses with shrouded windows.

It was towards the end of the winter, when the gardens were still black and gray but at the same time already green —green inside, something you knew but couldn't see— and when even along Longalley birds were singing in the soft rain, it was then that unexpectedly he had to go to Aunt with his mother; he found her in a stuffy sleeping room, also dim but harmless in a silly way, like the woman that lay there gasping. They didn't stay long. They walked back along quiet, free Longalley where the birds were singing, and then they turned the corner.

"Poor Aunt," said his mother. "Nobody loved her. You did love her, didn't you?"

"Yes." The force was present on Tillers Road but remained in ambush because he wasn't alone this time.

"Nobody loved her. In former times, perhaps, when she was young—oh well, that's very long ago..."

"The Retired Man lives here, doesn't he?" he asked. Because he wasn't alone this time he had the courage to push against the slow stream of poison and look at the house; the thick curtains hung down wavy before the blackness in which the unknown dwelled—and when he realized that he, now that Aunt had been overcome, wouldn't have to pass here often anymore, he was surprised to feel that his joy about

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this discovery was mixed with a certain regret since the hidden enemy would remain unknown and therefore invulnerable. If his mother belonged less to the heaviness of the adult world, so that he could have told her all, or had those angels in whom he formerly believed existed really—then perhaps one day he would have felt powerful enough to go and stand opposite this house and gaze into the shrouded windows with a power he would gather from all directions, until the enemy had been sucked out of the darkness and through the curtained barrier into the daylight to be killed even more mercilessly than Aunt; but he couldn't do it alone and had even now, hand in hand with a grown-up, to quicken his step as his skin had been touched again by the secret eyes.

But ten days later when Aunt was buried and he had to walk along with the funeral procession—he was old enough they said, and Aunt's favorite too—it might be that there the angels had been called by the low tolling of the bell and the taut thinking of death by all those people; angels floating noiselessly, invisibly, and sealing the coffin with joy for the ending of that evil, and for once protecting those who saw it to the grave; he had seldom felt so safe and strong as now while keeping up with the measured steps of the black people behind the coffin with his victim, and through the gray day in which the birds were silenced by the bell. When they turned the corner this certainty of being not alone this time made him look up and, while getting nearer, gaze steadily at those forbidding windows the hidden enemy always used. He willed now, he willed, he willed.

In reverence the Old Widow had closed her curtains too, this time, but he didn't see it. He approached the darkness. He didn't see how the Captain bowed his head to be able to lift his cap devotedly with a rheumatic arm. He approached and the pressure of danger was on his skin. He didn't notice the Nice People who very quietly came to walk behind the procession, rendering the last honors. He approached through an unseen cloud of poison, scalding sharper than ever; but he kept gazing at those gates of the dark, and willing.

The curtain slid apart. At the window stood a man for

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whom the day seemed to hesitate—an old man in a wrinkled dingy undervest; an old man with white stubbles and wisps around a white face which split in a toothless laugh as he shook his fist at Aunt's coffin.

They all averted their eyes. They all knew the secret now; at last they all shared the horror now. But he, who kept looking back through the waves of endless hate, he felt next to his terror the triumph as well. If in passing he ever felt the poison stream again, he could visualize the old man now; he could look into those eyes, invulnerable against that hate; and if he willed, really willed, he could deflect that hate and put the enemy to death with it—like Aunt with her hunger.

But he didn't come to Tillers Road very much anymore. And the garden never fully recovered from this gray winter and never became as green and flowering and vast as before. And later, much later, when he was a full-grown man, he still was caught sometimes by that feeling of being followed on a lonely road. The angels come too seldom.

●

## AUTUMN COMPLAINT

Tall hunters come; the fresh wind had the feel
Of an old anger blowing from beyond
The elms that edge the wood. Down on the pond,
In the brown reeds, a couple of blue teal
Rest for the moment, soon to aim their flight
To a new land, deep-gold and out of sight.

A shotgun cracks; dead leaves and gliding seeds
Drift to the earth. The teal have darkly fled,
Leaving the wind to whistle through the weeds
In the parched field where once we banqueted.

—DONALD PETERSEN

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Charles G. Finney

# Turtles in the Grass Alas

The new tenant of the old Thomas place sat in the patio and looked at the queen's wreath boiling over the aged but not crumbling wall. The Thomas place was on a side street in Manacle, Arizona, and the wall protected it from and insulated it against the business of the town. Off in a corner of the patio in a clump of oleanders stood a small igloo made of malpais rocks. From its entrance a little path led out into the grass and then disappeared. The new tenant judged that some sort of small animal lived in the queer shelter, but she had not yet seen the animal nor could she imagine what it might be. She had only been in the old Thomas place a week and had been too busy getting herself settled to become acquainted with its denizens.

The patio was exceedingly bushy and badly in need of weeding, trimming and mowing. Apparently no one had touched a hand to it since the old Thomases had died. Not that the vegetation seemed to object. There had been much rain, and the grasses, flowers, trees, shrubs and vines were exuberant in their abandon. Well, they had grown there for ages, and whatever needed to be done could wait a while longer. The plants were certainly not asking to be clipped, pruned, raked and spaded. The new tenant felt very content just to sit there in her garden chair and contemplate the quietly rioting green things in their refuge behind the wall.

Out of the igloo a creature appeared, immediately followed by a second one. They looked like muddy, rusty, beaten-up steel helmets moving along the ground. They made very slow time.

Even though the new tenant was a newcomer to Southern Arizona and its desert environs she recognized that the helmets were nothing but turtles and she knew that they were

*—Drawing by Donald Cardwell*

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harmless. She watched them a while. The igloo was obviously their home, and the patio was obviously their world, and obviously they had been there a long time. It seemed proper that she, the new mistress of the old Thomas place, should accord them some sort of greeting.

As she stood above them they neither looked at her nor made any other sign of recognition. They maintained their steady plodding; if she stationed herself in front of them they plodded around her feet without haste and without alarm. If she stirred one with her foot it merely plodded on. Exasperated, she turned one over on its back. With an astonishing snake-like flick of its head it righted itself and renewed its slow journey.

It came upon her that either they were so stupid they were not aware or her existence or were so placid they refused to let her presence annoy them.

She backed away from them and returned to her chair. The helmets' course seemed fixed clockwise around the patio. Sometimes they stopped to munch at grass but in general they ambled steadily along. She timed them with her wrist watch. They made less than thirty feet a minute. They completed two circuits of the patio and then went back into their igloo. Seemingly they had been out for a constitutional stroll.

Next morning she went to the patio to hang up some linens, and the two helmets from the igloo were already up and about. They moved around, sometimes together, sometimes apart, nibbling at green things, never making a sound, never being in a hurry. She filled a tree hole with water; one of them apparently coming upon it by accident, thrust its head an inch or two into the little pool and drank for what seemed to be five minutes. But it never summoned the other one, nor did the other one, passing minutes later within a few feet of the tree hole, pay any heed to the water that still stood in it.

The new tenant argued that if the one had been thirsty the other had to be thirsty also, and she picked up the second one and placed it beside the tree hole so that its head was directly over the water. It backed carefully away and resumed its plodding. A few minutes later it happened upon the pool

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again and this time it drank. She decided that these turtles were the stupidest things she had ever encountered. An earthworm had more sense; a snail had more vivacity.

During a trip to Manacle's public library she read up on what she could find there about turtles. It was very little, but it did tell her that her patio pets were tortoises, *Gopherous agassizzii*, and that knowledge of their habits was very limited. Heavens, she thought, they don't have any habits; they just exist. She looked at the helmets again when she got home and decided to weigh and measure them. As they both seemed exactly the same size she weighed one and measured the other. The one weighed a pound and a half, and the other measured fifteen inches around the waist and twenty-one inches around the long way. These statistics, once she had compiled them, seemed about as meaningless as anything else connected with the stupid things.

Another day, late in the afternoon, she sat in the patio reading, and it came to her gradually that the helmets were being more active than usual. One, it was true, was motionless in the grass with its head and legs withdrawn in its shell; but the other was lumbering around it in a frantic sort of way, butting at it and occasionally biting at the edges of its carapace.

What, wondered the tenant, had gotten into the odd things? Why should they fight? What had they to fight over? Such a foolish, innocuous battle, too. No damage whatever was being done. She watched them tolerantly, amused at the thought that even in Eden animals had probably battled. Long minutes later the actuality of what she was witnessing became clearer to her. They were not fighting at all. They were making love.

She began to wonder how long they had been in the patio.

She made inquiry of people who had known the Thomases, the place's builders, owners and longtime tenants. The house and the patio had been erected in 1900. This was definitely established. Then she found an oldtimer, a garrulous graybeard in his late seventies, who knew all about everything.

Mr. Thomas, said the graybeard, was a miner from Wales who boasted that he had spent more of his life underground

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than upon its surface. He mined in Arizona as he had mined in Wales. During one of his operations he had come upon the tortoises in a cave. Because they were partly subterranean —as he was—he gathered them up and brought them to his patio, thinking they would enjoy it there as much as he did. The tortoises, however, were strange and uncomfortable until Mr. Thomas built the igloo for them out of malpais rock. This they took over immediately as their new home, and their restlessness abated. They used the igloo as their hibernating place in the winter; in the summer they laid their eggs there and hatched them. Every year Mr. Thomas would gather up the baby turtles which appeared and take them back out into the desert. Mrs. Thomas had named the adult pair Peter and Paul because she could never tell them apart. Mr. Thomas had built the igloo in the year 1910, the graybeard concluded, and Peter and Paul were just as big then as they were now. The graybeard reckoned they didn't grow very fast.

The new tenant, armed with this report plus what she had read in the library, did some calculating. If Peter and Paul were full grown when Mr. Thomas had first put them in the patio they might have been at least ten years old then, and that offered the possibility that they were fifty now. Of course, they could be seventy or eighty; there was no way of telling. At any rate, taking all the factors in consideration, they were at least as old as she was; they might be a great deal older; and she had already begun to consider herself a sort of fossil.

But, old or not, here in their Eden they plodded around and, when the fancy struck them, made love. She looked back over her own life: childhood, girlhood, college, work in the educational field, scrimpings, savings, finally retirement forced by illness which brought her to Arizona—all very drab and uninteresting. And all that time, and it had been a long time, Peter and Paul had been living in this lovely patio, eating of its bounty, strolling unhurriedly behind its protective walls... and having fun. Stupid? Yes, they were demonstrably stupid... but Solomon in all his glory never had it so good.

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She wondered if it were possible anywhere in the frame of their existence for her to break through and make them somehow aware of her existence, to make them somehow dependent on something she might be able to add to their lives.

As a starter she offered them leaves of cabbage and lettuce, holding the slim wide green wilted pendants in front of their faces, murmuring to them gently, begging them to eat. They ate readily enough, taking crisp bites with their neat mandibles, engulfing, not chewing. She gave them berries, spreading the food on the grass before them. And they ate the berries, too, and the berry juice stained their jaws.

She thought that if every day she stationed herself in a certain spot in the patio with her cabbage, lettuce and berries they would learn to come up to her and even to beg her for something to eat, as do chickens or dogs or goldfish.

But they never did. If she walked over to one and knelt down and thrust a lettuce leaf in its face, it would eat of it if the fancy struck it. If she picked one up and put it down so that its head was among the berries, it would eat of them... if it were hungry at the moment for berries. But if she stood in her selected spot with her food offerings and waited for them to come to her, nothing happened at all. If they happened to wander past her it was exactly as if they were wandering past one of the ancient palms in the patio. They accorded her no recognition whatsoever.

She gave up with the feeding project because she did not like to feel like a shade lurking impalpably around, unable to make its presence felt.

A friend sent her a dachshund puppy "to keep her company." The pup's name, naturally, was Heinie. He was frisky and affectionate and had a delightful way of shivering most of the time. She put a blanket-lined box on the patio stoop for Heinie to sleep in.

On his first tour of the patio Heinie discovered Peter and Paul. He began to bark. She went over to quiet him, but he only barked all the more. He leaped around hysterically, then plopped down directly in front of one of them and began almost to scream. The tortoise had pulled its head into its shell; only the tip of its nose was visible between the beaded

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armor knees of its massive forelegs. The tortoise's knees parted a little, its head came out a little, and from its jaws issued an incredible hiss—long, sibilant, blazing with hatred. Then the tortoise pulled its head back in again and became immobile.

The tenant was startled and shocked. Heinie had gotten through to the thing. *Gopherous agassizzii* knew what dogs were and despised them. Somewhere, sometime, during the millions of years desert tortoises had been plodding around Southern Arizona, tortoise and ancestral dog had been enemies, and Peter—or was it Paul?—still remembered. Peter and Paul bore the same shape as their ancestors; Heinie had undergone many changes to become a dachshund out of that first strain of wild dog. But a million-year-old hate had been revived here in the patio. Who would have thought the quiet old helmets had it in them?

She gave Heinie back to his original owner with the lame explanation that he barked at the turtles and that she couldn't break him of the habit. Heinie's breeder looked at her incredulously. Why not give away or turn loose the turtles instead? Surely a registered dachshund was preferable to those repellent things? The tenant made a rather cluttered explanation: Heinie was so addicted to barking; Peter and Paul were so old; Heinie was a nice little fellow, but he jumped up and down on the furniture; Peter and Paul were very sedate. Heinie did require a certain amount of care; Peter and Paul required nothing. Heinie was a newcomer who didn't exactly fit into or appreciate the patio. Peter and Paul had been there an awfully long time; they loved the place. It was their home.

Heinie's breeder-owner took Heinie back, thinking this old friend was getting sort of mixed up the way some older people do.

The new tenant tended the garden in the old Thomas place. She tackled the shagginess of the plants and trimmed their abandon into a topiary neatness. She raked and she hoed and she mowed. Even the cluster of oleanders which surrounded the helmets' igloo received a crew cut. Peter and Paul paid no attention to any of it. They were like brown twin somethings in the grass. In the morning they did their feeding. In the late

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afternoon they took their constitutional stroll. During the heat of the day they took their siesta in their igloo.

She felt a growing affection for them. What were they, really, that through the eons they had never felt the desire or the need to change? They had never sprouted wings in order to fly, nor lengthened their legs in order to run, nor developed poison in order to slay. They had reached sufficiency back in the mists of time and had clung to it ever since. Such sufficiency, indeed, that an old fool like herself, a being a thousand times superior to them, saw to it that they could live out their lives in peace and undisturbed. She wasn't even bothered any more that they refused to recognize her existence.

One day she saw a little something in the grass, a little beetle-like, thimble-sized, floundering thing. She bent over and looked at it. It was a gopher tortoise, but no bigger than her thumbnail: a tiny replica of Peter and Paul. And she smiled as she remembered the afternoon when she thought the helmets were having a fight.

She picked the little thing up. Like its parents it made no protest nor struggle. It merely pulled its head into its shell a little way and became very patient. She put it back in the grass. It waited a minute or two, then floundered off on tiny, uncertain legs.

During the next few days the babies seemed to pop up everywhere. Something had to be done or else, if they all grew up, the patio would become overrun with them.

She gathered them into a basket. She collected fourteen.

She showed them to Peter and Paul. Neither paid any attention; neither showed any sign of pride or interest or concern or alarm. The babies might as well have been so many little stones.

She took the babies out into the desert, the far desert from whence Peter and Paul had come half a century before, and she freed them in a cave-like hollow and wondered what would happen to them.

"I suppose I'll have to do this every year," she said. "There's nothing else I can do."

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# BIRTHDAY POEM

In the 26th year of my age
I, two ears, two eyes, two hands only
(But only is enough to take the town)
I, pumping heart that bangs behind the brain,
Two lungs only to breathe the air that pours
Around these ugly buildings, over the babies
Tucked to their mothers' backs, over the feet
Dusty and wrinkled of the skinnyflint children
(Dancing their cherry eyes among the traffic);
That dashes against the concrete blocks to fall
In a shower of sparkles over scaffolding,
Cranes and trucks and sand and rubbish and
Fruit stalls and newspaper sellers, even over
The bad-tempered looking women from Mittel Europe;
I, two feet only, stride into this morning.

And I, in the 26th year of my age
Lie mouse-dead quiet in a room where harsh
Endless afternoon light shows up the walls
Two moveless eyes glare at. The world stretches
Savannah; desert; forest; dirty towns;
Suburbia; city centre; market place;
Stifling green valleys; Africa, Asia, England.
I, two legs that cannot cross the yard,
Lie heavy without rest upon my bed.
Words lie stacked in shelves throughout the world.
I in the useless 26th of my age
At 5 or 50 helpless to escape
Deaf ears, dim eyes, a dragging heart that bangs
Irregular behind the tired brain.

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Then I, in the 26th year of my age
Conquer the world again prone in my bath
Or on the silent stair sing loud hosannahs.
I, rogue and weakling, helpless to be helped
But strong as the changing earth that blows to dust
And then to mud that could have grown green trees,
I, slime and lily, beast of prey and fodder;
I, india-rubber, grubby putty, know-all nothing
Turn, hither-thither, this way-that way, 27.

—JENNY JOSEPH

## WHAT GOD USED FOR EYES BEFORE WE CAME

At night sometimes the big fog roams in tall
from the coast and away tall on the mountain road
it stands without moving while cars wander along
in the canyons they make with their lights maintaining the
worth
of local things. Along the continent shelf and back
far for searching the light engages the stone.

The brain blurring to know wanders that road,
goes the way Jesus came, irresistible,
calm over irrelevant history
toward a continent wall that moth rays touch—
our land backed by being old at night, lying deep,
the gray air holding ruin rock at Hovenweep.

—WILLIAM STAFFORD

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# LANDSCAPE

Standing in November (as the dead
Brown color seeps into the land),
In waders and in water, with a red

Cap bright in the low sun, and in his hand
The shotgun ready for the duck-quick
Blue eruption and the wide wings fanned

To beat the air then as the click-
Bang-spatter of the loud kill comes—
The hunter waits in tension in the thick

Stiff grass and cattails, and he hums
In expectation as the white seeds trail
The wind. Time almost numbs

His cocked hands, but he squeezes when a tail
Lifts up and outward toward the cloud
Above the reeds, and wings set sail,

Flushed by instinct into the stopped, loud
Exit of no water, where the clear
Fall bursts into pellets like a crowd

Of whispers on the silent ear,
That hunter and the hunted do not hear.

—RICHARD LYONS

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# NEW ENGLAND MILLS

The empty mills brood on the river, grim
with boarded doors and blackened eyes as bleak
as those of men who might have tales to spin
but will not speak.

No hum of loom nor fume of smoke withstands
abandonment. Still by, the river runs;
while only tattered handbills tell how hands
performed here once.

We read: "In Eighteen-Fifty-Five they rose,
man, wife, and ten-year-old, by candlelight,
arrived for work before the day unfroze,
and left at night.

"A cotton river, spindling wide off reels,
wound up their world, made mummies of their lives
as they revolved, in place, like water-wheels
the river drives.

"Their time was measured by the clang of gates,
the click of shuttles, whine of whistles, blast
of churchbells, by the bell which lonely waits
to be the last."

Now every mill goes South; here, phantoms loom.
Strung out along a muddy riverbed,
the vacant mills, like ponderous old tombs,
brood on their dead.

—ARTHUR FREEMAN

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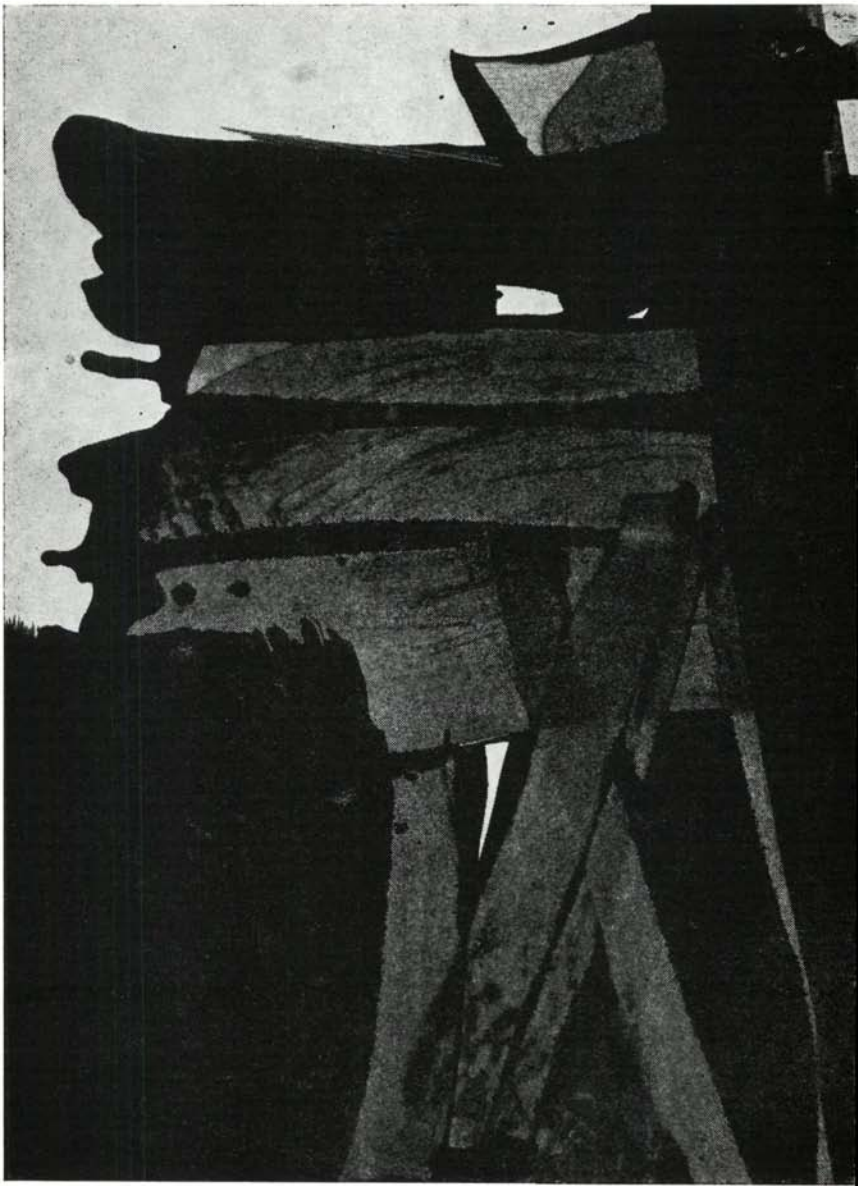

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# PIERRE SOULAGES

In the filigree of Raphael's paintings hides a pyramid, indicative of the Classic struggle for stability; in those of Rubens is implied a whirling oval, which speaks of the Baroque *perpetuum mobile.* In this way the work of every artist assembles around a fundamental pattern, revealing both about him and about his time, as metal dust gathers along the lines of force of a magnetic field. With Pierre Soulages, that structure is no longer underlying; it is not only the substance, but the very subject of the work. And so we recognize it clearly: the cross, or better, the crossing, the crossroads. Soulages' material is antagonism of lines, conflict of tones. Yet the final picture has assurance, equilibrium, for it takes its stand—poised rather than put—at the point of convergence and divergence, of momentary meetings.

Victor Hugo's dying words provide perhaps the neatest definition of Soulages' work: "Here is fought the battle between night and day." Its dominant theme, in the paintings as well as the drawings, is the struggle of white and black. The technique employed is rigorously the same in both media. And that technique itself reflects the artist's will to unite contradictions: stiff rectangular strips of leather chase pigment or ink before them across the surface. The same gesture, according to the degree of pressure exerted, conjures up light or dark, which are then caught in the act of, and at the point of, conversion from foreground to background, from background to foreground.

Soulages' forms likewise offer themselves to us at the crossroads of two natures. They have the weight of masses and the mobility of gestures. They are, so to speak, at once noun and verb. Now if we remember that the essential difference between the abstract art of the pre-war and that of the post-war periods is precisely this: the former was geometric, static, nominal; the latter is lyric, active, verbal—then we shall see that, historically too, Soulages stands at the crossroads. Thus, despite the simplicity of its ingredients, his work acquires gravity through the many resonances which it awakens in us and in our time. And it does so by limiting itself, strictly, to what is the basic purpose of all art: perpetuating moments of harmony amidst the discordances of chaos.

—PIERRE SCHNEIDER

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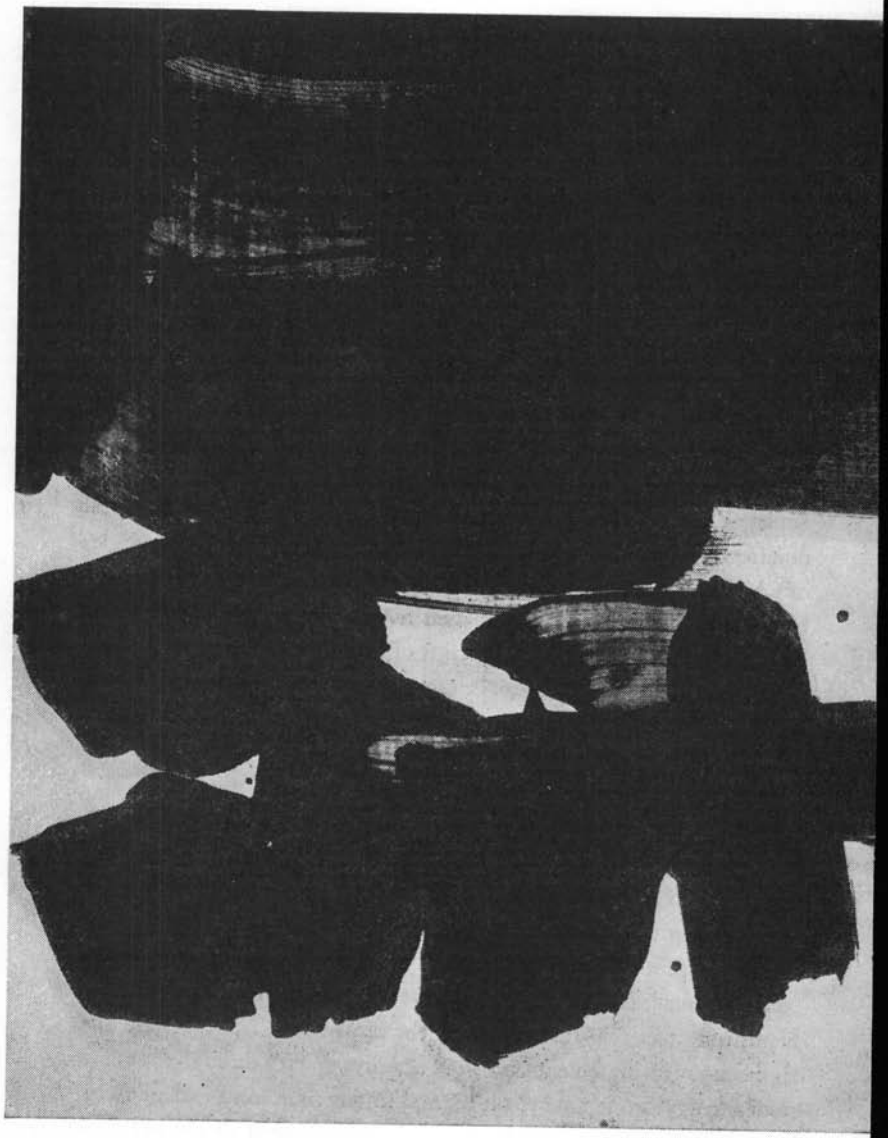

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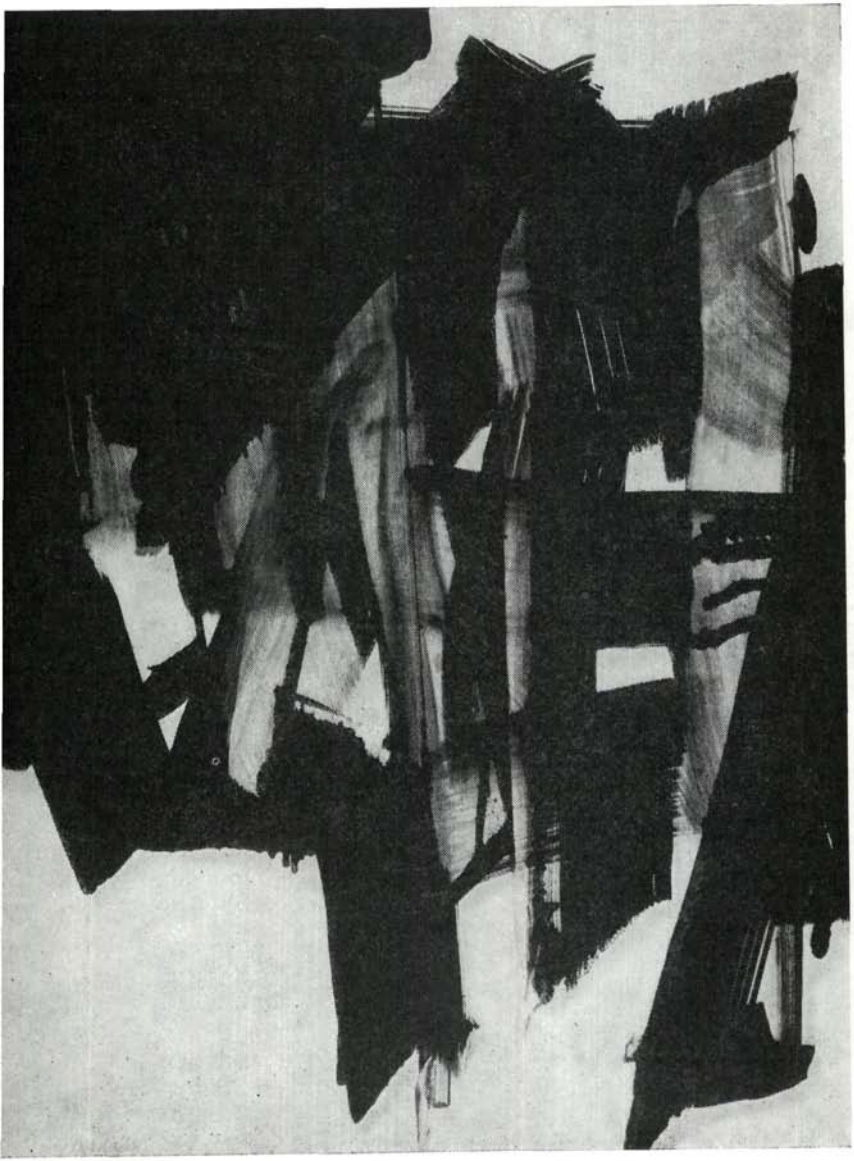

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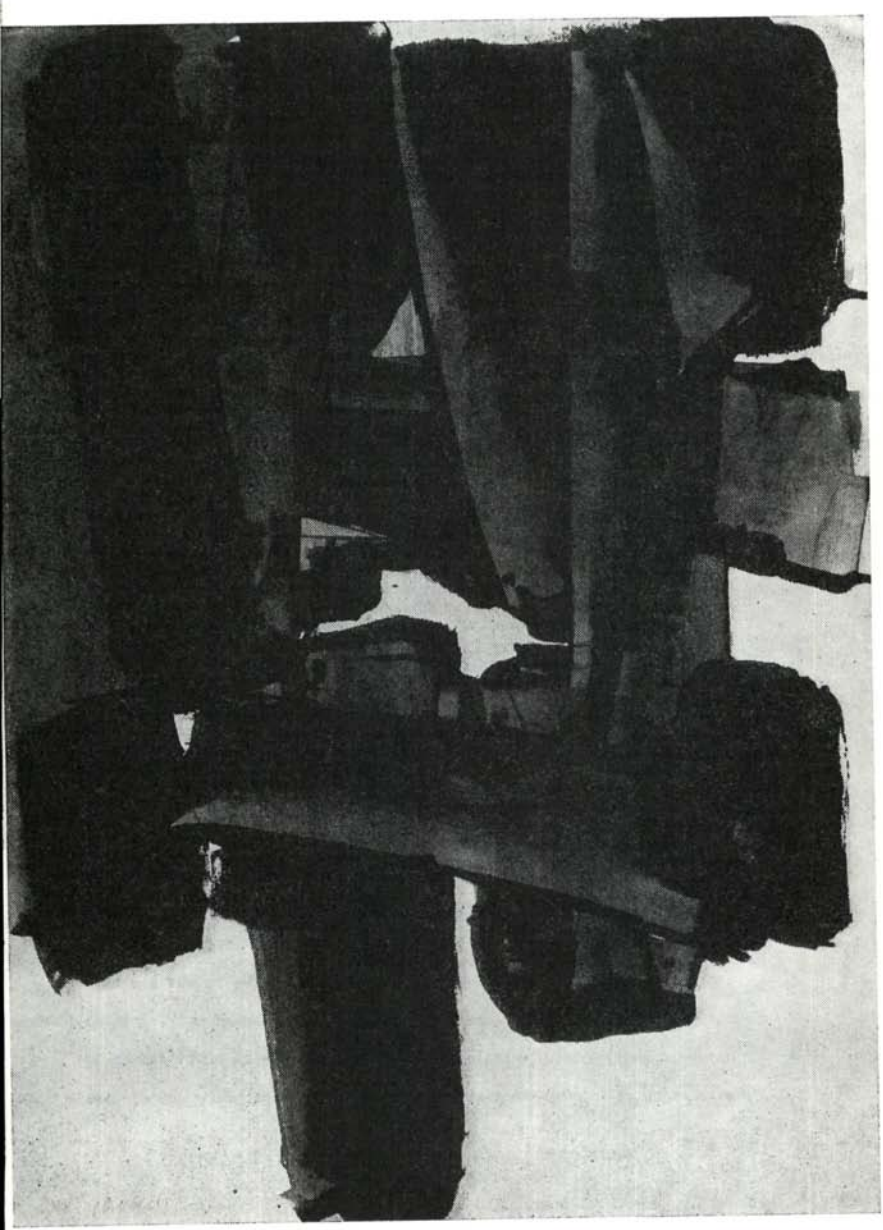

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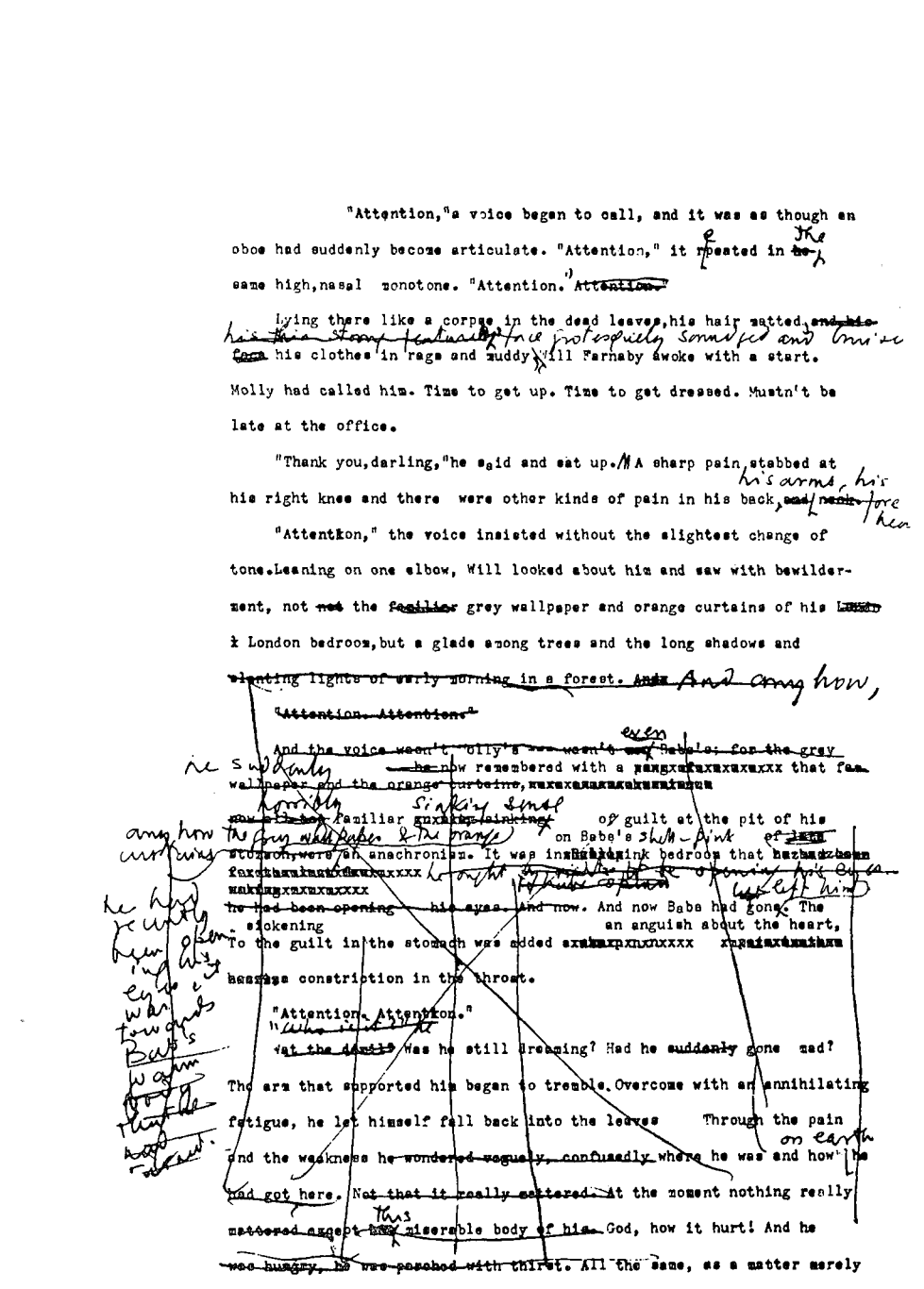

"Attention," a voice began to call, and it was as though an oboe had suddenly become articulate. "Attention," it repeated in the same high, nasal monotone. "Attention."

Lying there like a corpse in the dead leaves, his hair matted, his face [illegible] his clothes in rags and muddy, Will Farnaby awoke with a start. Molly had called him. Time to get up. Time to get dressed. Mustn't be late at the office.

"Thank you, darling," he said and sat up. A sharp pain stabbed at his right knee and there were other kinds of pain in his back, his arms, his forehead.

"Attention," the voice insisted without the slightest change of tone. Leaning on one elbow, Will looked about him and saw with bewilderment, not the familiar grey wallpaper and orange curtains of his London bedroom, but a glade among trees and the long shadows and slanting lights of early morning in a forest. And anyhow,

"Attention. Attention."

And the voice wasn't Molly's, wasn't even Babs's. For the grey wallpaper and the orange curtains, he now remembered with a horrible sinking sense of guilt at the pit of his stomach, were of an anachronism. It was in Babs's shell-pink bedroom that he had been opening his eyes. And now Babs had gone. The sickening guilt in the stomach was added to an anguish about the heart, to a constriction in the throat.

"Attention. Attention."

What the devil was he still dreaming? Had he suddenly gone mad? The arm that supported him began to tremble. Overcome with an annihilating fatigue, he let himself fall back into the leaves. Through the pain and the weakness he wondered vaguely, confusedly where he was and how he had got here. Not that it really mattered. At the moment nothing really mattered except this miserable body of his. God, how it hurt! And he was hungry, he was parched with thirst. All the same, as a matter merely

*Manuscript page from Huxley's novel in progress.*

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— *Paul Darrow*

THE ART OF FICTION XXIV

# ALDOUS HUXLEY

Among serious novelists, Aldous Huxley is surely the wittiest and most irreverent. Ever since the early twenties, his name has been a byword for a particular kind of social satire; in fact, he has immortalized in satire a whole period and a way of life. In addition to his ten novels, Huxley has written, during the course of an extremely prolific career, poetry, drama, essays, travel, biography, and history.

Descended from two of the most eminent Victorian families, he inherited science and letters from his grandfather T. H. Huxley and his great-uncle Matthew Arnold respectively. He absorbed both strains in an erudition so unlikely that it has sometimes been regarded as a kind of literary gamesmanship. (In conversation his learning comes out spontaneously, without the slightest hint of premeditation; if someone raises the topic of Victorian gastronomy, for example, Huxley will recite a typical daily menu of

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Edward VII, meal by meal, course by course, down to the last crumb.) The plain fact is that Aldous Huxley is one of the most prodigiously learned writers, not merely of this century, but of all time.

After Eton and Balliol, he became a member of the post-war intellectual upper crust, the society he set out to vivisect and anatomize. He first made his name with such brilliant satires as *Antic Hay* and *Point Counter Point*, writing in the process part of the social history of the twenties. In the thirties he wrote his most influential novel, *Brave New World*, combining satire and science fiction in the most successful of futuristic utopias. Since 1937, when he settled in Southern California, he has written fewer novels and turned his attention more to philosophy, history, and mysticism. Although remembered best for his early satires, he is still productive and provocative as ever.

It is rather odd to find Aldous Huxley in a suburb of Los Angeles called Hollywoodland. He lives in an unpretentious hilltop house that suggests the Tudor period of American real estate history. On a clear day he can look out across miles of cluttered, sprawling city at a broad sweep of the Pacific. Behind him dry brown hills rise to a monstrous sign that dominates the horizon, proclaiming HOLLYWOOD in aluminum letters twenty feet high.

Mr. Huxley is a very tall man—he must be 6′4″—and though lean, very broad across the shoulders. He carries his 65 years lightly indeed; in fact he moves so quietly as to appear weightless, almost wraithlike. His eyesight is limited, but he seems to find his way about instinctively, without touching anything.

In manner and speech he is very gentle. Where one might have been led to expect the biting satirist or the vague mystic, one is impressed instead by how quiet and gentle he is on the one hand, how sensible and down-to-earth on the other. His manner is reflected in his lean, gray, emaciated face: attentive, reflective, and for the most part unsmiling. He listens patiently while others speak, then answers deliberately.

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INTERVIEWERS

Would you tell us something first about the way you work?

HUXLEY

I work regularly. I always work in the mornings, and then again a little bit before dinner. I'm not one of those who work at night. I prefer to read at night. I usually work four or five hours a day. I keep at it as long as I can, until I feel myself going stale. Sometimes, when I bog down, I start reading — fiction or psychology or history, it doesn't much matter what— not to borrow ideas or materials, but simply to get started again. Almost anything will do the trick.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you do much rewriting?

HUXLEY

Generally, I write everything many times over. All my thoughts are second thoughts. And I correct each page a great deal, or rewrite it several times as I go along.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you keep a notebook, like certain characters in your novels?

HUXLEY

No, I don't keep notebooks. I have occasionally kept diaries for short periods, but I'm very lazy, I mostly don't. One should keep notebooks, I think, but I haven't.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you block out chapters or plan the overall structure when you start out on a novel?

HUXLEY

No, I work away a chapter at a time, finding my way as I go. I know very dimly when I start what's going to happen. I just have a very general idea, and then the thing develops as I write. Sometimes—it's happened to me more than once—

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I will write a great deal, then find it just doesn't work, and have to throw the whole thing away. I like to have a chapter finished before I begin on the next one. But I'm never entirely certain what's going to happen in the next chapter until I've worked it out. Things come to me in driblets, and when the driblets come I have to work hard to make them into something coherent.

INTERVIEWERS

Is the process pleasant or painful?

HUXLEY

Oh, it's not painful, though it is hard work. Writing is a very absorbing occupation and sometimes exhausting. But I've always considered myself very lucky to be able to make a living at something I enjoy doing. So few people can.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you ever use maps or charts or diagrams to guide you in your writing?

HUXLEY

No, I don't use anything of that sort, though I do read up a good deal on my subject. Geography books can be a great help in keeping things straight. I had no trouble finding my way around the English part of *Brave New World*, but I had to do an enormous amount of reading up on New Mexico, because I'd never been there. I read all sorts of Smithsonian reports on the place and then did the best I could to imagine it. I didn't actually go there until six years later, in 1937, when we visited Frieda Lawrence.

INTERVIEWERS

When you start out on a novel, what sort of a general idea do you have? How did you begin *Brave New World*, for example?

HUXLEY

Well, that started out as a parody of H. G. Wells' *Men Like Gods*, but gradually it got out of hand and turned into some-

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thing quite different from what I'd originally intended. As I became more and more interested in the subject, I wandered farther and farther from my original purpose.

INTERVIEWERS

What are you working on now?

HUXLEY

At the moment I'm writing a rather peculiar kind of fiction. It's a kind of fantasy, a kind of reverse *Brave New World*, about a society in which real efforts are made to realize human potentialities. I want to show how humanity can make the best of both Eastern and Western worlds. So the setting is an imaginary island between Ceylon and Sumatra, at a meeting place of Indian and Chinese influence. One of my principal characters is, like Darwin and my grandfather, a young scientist on one of those scientific expeditions the British Admiralty sent out in the 1840's; he's a Scotch doctor, who rather resembles James Esdaile, the man who introduced hypnosis into medicine. And then, as in *News from Nowhere* and other utopias, I have another intruder from the outside world, whose guided tour provides a means of describing the society. Unfortunately, he's also the serpent in the garden, looking enviously at this happy, prosperous state. I haven't worked out the ending yet, but I'm afraid it must end with paradise lost—if one is to be realistic.

INTERVIEWERS

In the 1946 preface to *Brave New World* you make certain remarks that seem to prefigure this new utopia. Was the work already incubating then?

HUXLEY

Yes, the general notion was in the back of my mind at that time, and it has preoccupied me a good deal ever since—though not necessarily as the theme for a novel. For a long time I had been thinking a great deal about various ways of realizing human potentialities; then about three years ago I

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decided to write these ideas into a novel. It's gone very slowly because I've had to struggle with the fable, the framework to carry the expository part. I know what I want to say clearly enough; the problem is how to embody the ideas. Of course, you can always talk them out in dialogue, but you can't have your characters talking indefinitely without becoming transparent—and tiresome. Then there's always the problem of point of view: who's going to tell the story or live the experiences? I've had a great deal of trouble working out the plot and rearranging sections that I've already written. Now I think I can see my way clear to the end. But I'm afraid it's getting hopelessly long. I'm not sure what I'm going to do with it all.

INTERVIEWERS

Some writers hesitate to talk about their work in progress for fear they'll talk it away. You aren't afraid of that?

HUXLEY

No, I don't mind talking about my writing at all. In fact, it might be a good practice; it might give me a clearer notion of what I was trying to do. I've never discussed my writing with others much, but I don't believe it can do any harm. I don't think that there's any risk that ideas or materials will evaporate.

INTERVIEWERS

Some writers—Virginia Woolf, for example—have been painfully sensitive to criticism. Have you been much affected by your critics?

HUXLEY

No, they've never had any effect on me, for the simple reason that I've never read them. I've never made a point of writing for any particular person or audience; I've simply tried to do the best job I could and let it go at that. The critics don't interest me because they're concerned with what's past and done, while I'm concerned with what comes next. I've

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never re-read my early novels, for example. Perhaps I should read them one of these days.

INTERVIEWERS

How did you happen to start writing? Do you remember?

HUXLEY

I started writing when I was 17, during a period when I was almost totally blind and could hardly do anything else. I typed out a novel by the touch system; I couldn't even read it. I've no idea what's become of it; I'd be curious to see it now, but it's lost. My aunt, Mrs. Humphry Ward, was a kind of literary godmother to me. I used to have long talks with her about writing; she gave me no end of sound advice. She was a very sound writer herself, rolled off her plots like sections of macadamized road. She had a curious practice: every time she started work on a new novel, she read Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*. It seemed to act as a kind of trigger or release-mechanism. Then later, during the war and after, I met a great many writers through Lady Ottoline Morrell. She used to invite all kinds of people out to her country house. I met Katherine Mansfield there, and Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves, and all the Bloomsburies. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Roger Fry. Listening to his talk about the arts was a liberal education. At Oxford I began writing verse. I had several volumes of verse published before I turned to writing stories. I was very lucky; I never had any difficulty getting published. After the war, when I came down from Oxford, I had to make my living. I had a job on the *Athenaeum*, but that paid very little, not enough to live on; so in spare moments I worked for the Condé Nast publications. I worked for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*; and for *House and Garden*. I used to turn out articles on everything from decorative plaster to Persian rugs. And that wasn't all. I did dramatic criticism for the *Westminster Review*. Why—would you believe it?—I even did music criticism. I heartily recommend this sort of journalism as an apprenticeship. It forces you to write on everything under the sun, it develops your facility, it teaches you to

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master your material quickly, and it makes you look at things. Fortunately, though, I didn't have to keep at it very long. After *Crome Yellow*—that was 1921—I didn't have to worry so much about making a living. I was already married, and we were then able to live on the continent—in Italy until the Fascists made life unpleasant, then in France. We had a little house outside Paris, where I could write without being disturbed. We'd be in London part of every year, but there was always too much going on; I couldn't get much writing done there.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think that certain occupations are more conducive to creative writing than others? In other words, does the work you do or the company you keep affect your writing.

HUXLEY

I don't believe there is an ideal occupation for the writer. He could write under almost any circumstance, even in complete isolation. Why, look at Balzac: locked up in a secret room in Paris, hiding from his creditors, and producing the *Comédie Humaine*. Or think of Proust in his cork-lined room (although of course he had plenty of visitors). I suppose the best occupation is just meeting a great many different kinds of people and seeing what interests them. That's one of the disadvantages of getting older; you're inclined to make intimate contacts with fewer people.

INTERVIEWERS

What would you say makes the writer different from other people?

HUXLEY

Well, one has the urge, first of all, to order the facts one observes and to give meaning to life; and along with that goes the love of words for their own sake and a desire to manipulate them. It's not a matter of intelligence; some very intelligent and original people don't have the love of words or the knack

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to use them effectively. On the verbal level they express themselves very badly.

INTERVIEWERS

What about creativeness in general?

HUXLEY

Yes, what about it? Why is it that in most children education seems to destroy the creative urge? Why do so many boys and girls leave school with blunted perceptions and a closed mind? A majority of young people seem to develop mental arteriosclerosis forty years before they get the physical kind. Another question: why do some people remain open and elastic into extreme old age, whereas others become rigid and unproductive before they're fifty? It's a problem in biochemistry and adult education.

INTERVIEWERS

Some psychologists have claimed that the creative urge is a kind of neurosis. Would you agree?

HUXLEY

Most emphatically not. I don't believe for a moment that creativity is a neurotic symptom. On the contrary, the neurotic who succeeds as an artist has had to overcome a tremendous handicap. He creates in spite of his neurosis, not because of it.

INTERVIEWERS

You've never had much use for Freud, have you?

HUXLEY

The trouble with Freudian psychology is that it is based exclusively on a study of the sick. Freud never met a healthy human being—only patients and other psychoanalysts. Then too, Freudian psychology is only concerned with the past. Other systems of psychology, that concern themselves with the present state of the subject or his future potentialities, seem to me to be more realistic.

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INTERVIEWERS

Do you see any relation between the creative process and the use of such drugs as lysergic acid?

HUXLEY

I don't think there is any generalization one can make on this. Experience has shown that there's an enormous variation in the way people respond to lysergic acid. Some people probably could get direct aesthetic inspiration for painting or poetry out of it. Others I don't think could. For most people it's an extremely significant experience, and I suppose in an indirect way it could help the creative process. But I don't think one can sit down and say, "I want to write a magnificent poem, and so I'm going to take lysergic acid." I don't think it's by any means certain that you would get the result you wanted—you might get almost any result.

INTERVIEWERS

Would the drug give more help to the lyric poet than the novelist?

HUXLEY

Well, the poet would certainly get an extraordinary view of life which he wouldn't have had in any other way, and this might help him a great deal. But, you see (and this is the most significant thing about the experience), during the experience you're really not interested in doing anything practical—even writing lyric poetry. If you were having a love affair with a woman, would you be interested in writing about it? Of course not. And during the experience you're not particularly interested in words, because the experience transcends words and is quite inexpressible in terms of words. So the whole notion of conceptualizing what is happening seems very silly. *After* the event, it seems to me quite possible that it might be of great assistance: people would see the universe around them in a very different way and would be inspired, possibly, to write something about it.

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INTERVIEWERS

But is there much carry-over from the experience?

HUXLEY

Well, there's always a complete memory of the experience. You remember something extraordinary having happened. And to some extent you can relive the experience, particularly the transformation of the outside world. You get hints of this, you see the world in this transfigured way now and then—not to the same pitch of intensity, but something of the kind. It does help you to look at the world in a new way. And you come to understand very clearly the way that certain specially gifted people have seen the world. You are actually introduced into the kind of world that Van Gogh lived in, or the kind of world that Blake lived in. You begin to have a direct experience of this kind of world while you're under the drug, and afterwards you can remember and to some slight extent recapture this kind of world, which certain privileged people have moved in and out of, as Blake obviously did all the time.

INTERVIEWERS

But the artist's talents won't be any different from what they were before he took the drug?

HUXLEY

I don't see why they should be different. Some experiments have been made to see what painters can do under the influence of the drug, but most of the examples I have seen are very uninteresting. You could never hope to reproduce to the full extent the quite incredible intensity of color that you get under the influence of the drug. Most of the things I have seen are just rather tiresome bits of expressionism, which correspond hardly at all, I would think, to the actual experience. Maybe an immensely gifted artist—someone like Odilon Redon (who probably saw the world like this all the time anyhow)—maybe such a man could profit by the lysergic acid experience, could use his visions as models, could reproduce on canvas the external world as it is transfigured by the drug.

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INTERVIEWERS

Here this afternoon, as in your book, *The Doors of Perception*, you've been talking chiefly about the visual experience under the drug, and about painting. Is there any similar gain in psychological insight?

HUXLEY

Yes, I think there is. While one is under the drug one has penetrating insights into the people around one, and also into one's own life. Many people get tremendous recalls of buried material. A process which may take six years of psychoanalysis happens in an hour—and considerably cheaper! And the experience can be very liberating and widening in other ways. It shows that the world one habitually lives in is merely a creation of this conventional, closely conditioned being which one is, and that there are quite other kinds of worlds outside. It's a very salutory thing to realize that the rather dull universe in which most of us spend most of our time is not the only universe there is. I think it's healthy that people should have this experience.

INTERVIEWERS

Could such psychological insight be helpful to the fiction writer?

HUXLEY

I doubt it. After all, fiction is the fruit of sustained effort. The lysergic acid experience is a revelation of something outside of time and the social order. To write fiction, one needs a whole series of inspirations about people in an actual environment, and then a whole lot of hard work on the basis of those inspirations.

INTERVIEWERS

Is there any resemblance between lysergic acid, or mescalin, and the "soma" of your *Brave New World*?

HUXLEY

None whatever. Soma is an imaginary drug, with three different effects—euphoric, hallucinant, or sedative—an im-

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possible combination. Mescalin is the active principle of the impeyote cactus, which has been used for a long time by the Indians of the Southwest in their religious rites. It is now synthesized. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) is a chemical compound with effects similar to mescalin; it was developed about twelve years ago, and it is only being used experimentally at present. Mescalin and lysergic acid transfigure the external world and in some cases produce visions. Most people have the sort of positive and enlightening experience I've described; but the visions may be infernal as well as celestial. These drugs are physiologically innocuous, except to people with liver damage. They leave most people with no hangover, and they are not habit-forming. Psychiatrists have found that, skillfully used, they can be very helpful in the treatment of certain kinds of neuroses.

INTERVIEWERS

How did you happen to get involved in experiments with mescalin and lysergic acid?

HUXLEY

Well, I'd been interested in it for some years, and I had been in correspondence with Humphrey Osmond, a very gifted young British psychiatrist working in Canada. When he started testing its effects on different kinds of people, I became one of his guinea pigs. I've described all this in *The Doors of Perception*.

INTERVIEWERS

To return to writing, in *Point Counter Point* you have Philip Quarles say, "I am not a congenital novelist." Would you say the same of yourself?

HUXLEY

I don't think of myself as a congenital novelist—no. For example, I have great difficulty in inventing plots. Some people are born with an amazing gift for story-telling; it's a gift which I've never had at all. One reads, for example, Stevenson's accounts of how all the plots for his stories were

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provided in dreams by his subconscious mind (what he calls the "Brownies" working for him), and that all he had to do was to work up the material they had provided. I've never had any Brownies. The great difficulty for me has always been creating situations.

INTERVIEWERS

Developing character has been easier for you than creating plots?

HUXLEY

Yes, but even then I'm not very good at creating people; I don't have a very wide repertory of characters. These are difficult things for me. I suppose it's largely a question of temperament. I don't happen to have the right kind of temperament.

INTERVIEWERS

By the phrase "congenital novelist" we thought you meant one who is only interested in writing novels.

HUXLEY

I suppose this is another way of saying the same thing. The congenital novelist doesn't have other interests. Fiction for him is an absorbing thing which fills up his mind and takes all his time and energy, whereas someone else with a different kind of mind has these other, extracurricular activities going on.

INTERVIEWERS

As you look back on your novels, which are you most happy with?

HUXLEY

I personally think the most successful was *Time Must Have a Stop*. I don't know, but it seemed to me that I integrated what may be called the essay element with the fictional element better there than in other novels. Maybe this is not the

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case. It just happens to be the one that I like best, because I feel that it came off best.

INTERVIEWERS

As you see it, then, the novelist's problem is to fuse the "essay element" with the story?

HUXLEY

Well, there are lots of excellent story-tellers who are simply story-tellers, and I think it's a wonderful gift, after all. I suppose the extreme example is Dumas: that extraordinary old gentleman, who sat down and thought nothing of writing six volumes of *The Count of Monte Cristo* in a few months. And my God, *Monte Cristo* is damned good! But it isn't the last word. When you can find story-telling which carries at the same time a kind of parable-like meaning (such as you get, say, in Dostoevsky or in the best of Tolstoy), this is something extraordinary, I feel. I'm always flabbergasted when I re-read some of the short things of Tolstoy, like *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. What an astounding work that is! Or some of the short things of Dostoevsky, like *Notes from Underground*.

INTERVIEWERS

What other novelists have you especially admired?

HUXLEY

It's awfully difficult for me to answer such a question. I read individual books that I like and take things from and am stimulated by... As a very young man, as an undergraduate, I used to read a lot of French novels. I was very fond of a novelist who is now very much out-of-date—Anatole France. I haven't read him now for forty years; I don't know what he's like. Then I remember reading the first volume of Proust in 1915 and being tremendously impressed by it. (I re-read it recently and was curiously disappointed.) Gide I read at that time too.

INTERVIEWERS

Several of your early novels, *Point Counter Point* especially,

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appear to have been written under the influence of Proust and Gide. Is this so?

HUXLEY

I suppose some of my early novels are faintly Proustian. I don't think I shall ever experiment again with the kind of treatment of time and remembrance of things past that I used in *Eyeless in Gaza*, shifting back and forth in time to show the pressure of the past on the present.

INTERVIEWERS

Then in some of those early novels you also make use of musical effects, much as Gide does.

HUXLEY

The marvelous thing about music is that it does so easily and rapidly what can be done only very laboriously in words, or really can't be done at all. It's futile to even attempt to write musically. But I've tried in some of my essays—in *Themes and Variations*, for instance. Then I've used the equivalent of musical variations in some of my stories, where I take certain traits of character and treat them seriously in one personage and comically, in a sort of parody, in another.

INTERVIEWERS

Were you much taken with Joyce?

HUXLEY

Never very much—no. I never got very much out of *Ulysses*. I think it's an extraordinary book, but so much of it consists of rather lengthy demonstrations of how a novel ought *not* to be written, doesn't it? He does show nearly every conceivable way it should not be written, and then goes on to show how it might be written.

INTERVIEWERS

What do you think of Virginia Woolf's fiction?

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HUXLEY

Her works are very strange. They're very beautiful, aren't they? But one gets such a curious feeling from them. She sees with incredible clarity, but always as though through a sheet of plate glass: she never touches anything. Her books are not immediate. They're very puzzling to me.

INTERVIEWERS

How about Henry James? Or Thomas Mann?

HUXLEY

James leaves me very cold. And I find Mann a little boring. He's obviously an admirable novelist. You know, I used to go every summer to the place described in *Mario and the Magician*, and it seemed to me that I never got any sense of the place out of Mann. I knew it very well: the coast where Shelley was washed up, under the mountains of Carrara, where the marble comes from. It was an incredibly beautiful place then. Now, needless to say, it's all become like Coney Island, with millions of people there.

INTERVIEWERS

Speaking of places, do you think your own writing was affected when you transplanted yourself from England to America?

HUXLEY

I don't know—I don't think so. I never strongly felt that the place where I lived had great importance to me.

INTERVIEWERS

Then you don't think the social climate makes much difference to fiction?

HUXLEY

Well, what is "fiction"? So many people talk about "fiction" or "the writer" as though you could generalize about them. There are always many diverse members of the group; and fiction is a genus of which there are many species. I think that certain species of fiction quite clearly call for a certain locale. It's impossible that Trollope could have written except

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where he did write. He couldn't have gone off to Italy like Byron or Shelley. He required the English middle class life. But then look at Lawrence. At the beginning you would have said that he had to stay in the Midlands of England, near the coal mines. But he could write anywhere.

INTERVIEWERS

Now, thirty years later, would you care to say what you think of Lawrence as a novelist and as a man?

HUXLEY

I occasionally re-read some of his books. How good he is! Especially in the short stories. And the other day I read part of *Women in Love*, and that again seemed very good. The vividness, the incredible vividness of the descriptions of nature is amazing in Lawrence. But sometimes one doesn't know what he's getting at. In *The Plumed Serpent*, for instance, he'll glorify the Mexican Indians with their dark life of the blood on one page, and then on the next he'll damn the lazy natives like a British colonel in the days of Kipling. That book is a mass of contradictions. I was very fond of Lawrence as a man. I knew him very well the last four years of his life. I had met him during the first World War and saw him a certain amount then, but I didn't get to know him really well till 1926. I was a little disturbed by him. You know, he *was* rather disturbing. And to a conventionally brought up young bourgeois he was rather difficult to understand. But later on I got to know and like him. My first wife became very friendly with him and understood him and they got on very well together. We saw the Lawrences often during those last four years; they stayed with us in Paris, then we were together in Switzerland, and we visited them at the Villa Mirenda near Florence. My wife typed out the manuscript of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for him, even though she was a bad typist and had no patience with English spelling—she was a Belgian, you know. Then she didn't always appreciate the nuances of the language she was typing. When she started using some of those four-letter words in conversation, Lawrence was profoundly shocked.

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INTERVIEWERS

Why did Lawrence keep moving around so much?

HUXLEY

One reason he was forever moving on is that his relations with people would become so complicated that he'd have to get away. He was a man who loved and hated too intensely; he both loved and hated the same people at the same time. Then, like a great many tubercular people, he was convinced that climate had a great effect on him—not only the temperature, but the direction of the wind, and all sorts of atmospheric conditions. He had invented a whole mythology of climate. In his last years he wanted to go back to New Mexico. He had been very happy there on the ranch in Taos. But he wasn't strong enough to make the trip. By all the rules of medicine he should have been dead; but he lived on, supported by some kind of energy that seemed to be independent of his body. And he kept on writing to the end... We were there, in Vence, when he died... He actually died in my first wife's arms. After his death his wife Frieda was utterly helpless and didn't know what to do with herself. Physically, she was very strong, but in the practical affairs of life she depended on Lawrence entirely. For instance, when she went back to London after his death to settle his affairs, she stayed in a particularly dreary old hotel, simply because she had stayed there once with him and didn't feel secure in any other place.

INTERVIEWERS

Certain characters in your novels seem to have been based on people you knew—on Lawrence and Norman Douglas and Middleton Murry, for instance. Is this true? And how do you convert a real person into a fictional character?

HUXLEY

I try to imagine how certain people I know would behave in certain circumstances. Of course I base my characters partly on the people I know—one can't escape it—but fictional characters are oversimplified; they're much less complex than the people

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one knows. There is something of Murry in several of my characters, but I wouldn't say I'd put Murry in a book. And there is something of Norman Douglas in old Scogan of *Crome Yellow*. I knew Douglas quite well in the twenties in Florence. He was a remarkably intelligent and highly educated man, but he had deliberately limited himself to the point where he would talk about almost nothing but drink and sex. He became quite boring after a time. Did you ever see that collection of pornographic limericks that he had privately printed? It was the only way, poor fellow, that he could make some money. It was a terribly unfunny book. I didn't see him at all in his later years.

INTERVIEWERS

Lawrence and Frieda are represented in Mark and Mary Rampion of *Point Counter Point*, aren't they? You even follow the story of the Lawrences quite closely in many particulars.

HUXLEY

Yes, I suppose so, but only a small part of Lawrence is in that character. Isn't it remarkable how everyone who knew Lawrence has felt compelled to write about him? Why, he's had more books written about him than any writer since Byron!

INTERVIEWERS

How do you name your characters? Do you pick them at random, like Simenon, out of telephone directories? Or are the names meant to convey something? Some of your characters in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* have odd names; do these have any particular significance?

HUXLEY

Yes, names are very important, aren't they? And the most unlikely names keep turning up in real life, so one must be careful. I can explain some of the names in *After Many a Summer*. Take Virginia Maunciple. That name was suggested to me by Chaucer's manciple—what is a manciple, anyhow?

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a kind of steward—it's the sort of a name that a movie starlet would choose, in the hope of being unique, custom-made. She's called Virginia because she appears so virginal to Jeremy, and so obviously isn't, in fact; also because of her devotion to the Madonna. Dr. Sigmund Obispo: here the first name obviously refers to Freud, and Obispo I took from San Luis Obispo for local color and because it has a comical sound. And Jeremy Pordage. There's a story connected with that name. When I was an undergraduate at Oxford, Professor Walter Raleigh (who was a marvelous teacher) had me do a piece of research on the literature connected with the Popish Plot. One of the authors mentioned by Dryden under the name of "lame Mephibosheth" was called Pordage. His poetry, when I read it at the Bodleian, turned out to be unbelievably bad. But the name was a treasure. As for Jeremy, that was chosen for the sound: combined with Pordage it has a rather spinsterish ring. Propter came from the Latin for "on account of" —because, as a wise man, he is concerned with ultimate causes. Another reason why I chose the name was its occurrence in a poem of Edward Lear, "Incidents in the Life of My Uncle Arly." Let's see, how does it go now?

*Like the ancient Medes and Persians,*
*Always by his own exertions*
*He subsisted on those hills;*
*Whiles, by teaching children spelling,*
*Or at times by merely yelling,*
*Or at intervals by selling*
*"Propter's Nicodemus Pills."*

Pete Boone doesn't mean anything in particular. It's just a straightforward American name that suits the character. Jo Stoyte, too—the name simply means what it sounds like.

INTERVIEWERS

You seem to have turned away from satire in recent years. What do you think of satire now?

HUXLEY

Yes, I suppose I have changed in that respect. But I'm all for

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satire. We need it. People everywhere take things much too seriously, I think. People are much too solemn about things. I'm all for sticking pins into episcopal behinds, and that sort of thing. It seems to me a most salutory proceeding.

INTERVIEWERS

Were you fond of Swift as a young man?

HUXLEY

Oh yes, I was very fond of Swift. And of another book, a wonderfully funny book, one of the few old books that have stayed funny: *The Letters of Obscure Men*, the *Epistoles Obscurorum Virorum*. I'm sure Swift must have read it; it is so much his method. In general, I get a great deal out of the eighteenth century: Hume, Law, Crebillon, Diderot, Fielding, Pope—though I'm old-fashioned enough to think the Romantics are better poets than Pope.

INTERVIEWERS

You praised Fielding long ago in your essay "Tragedy and the Whole Truth." Do you still believe that fiction can give a fuller view of life than tragedy?

HUXLEY

Yes, I still believe that tragedy is not necessarily the highest form. The highest form does not yet exist, perhaps. I can conceive of something much more inclusive and yet equally sublime, something which is adumbrated in the plays of Shakespeare. I think that in some way the tragic and comic elements can be more totally fused. I dont' know how. Don't ask me how. If we get another Shakespeare one of these days —as I hope we will—perhaps we'll see. As I say in that essay, Homer has a kind of fusion of these elements, but on a very simple-minded level. But, my goodness, how good Homer is, anyhow! And there's another really sublime writer who has this quality—Chaucer. Why, Chaucer invented a whole psychology out of absolutely nothing: an incredible achievement. It's one of the great misfortunes of English literature

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that Chaucer wrote at a time when his language was to become incomprehensible. If he had been born two or three hundred years later I think the whole course of English literature would have been changed. We wouldn't have had this sort of Platonic mania—separating mind from body and spirit from matter.

INTERVIEWERS

Then, even though you have been writing fewer novels in recent years, you don't think less highly of the art of fiction than you used to?

HUXLEY

Oh, no, no, no. I think fiction—and biography and history—are *the* forms. I think one can say much more about general abstract ideas in terms of concrete characters and situations, whether fictional or real, than one can in abstract terms. Several of the books I like best of what I've written are historical and biographical things: *Grey Eminence*, and *The Devils of Loudun*, and the biography of Maine de Biran, the *Variations on a Philosopher*. These are all discussions of what are to me important general ideas in terms of specific lives and incidents. And I must say I think that probably *all* philosophy ought to be written in this form; it would be much more profound and much more edifying. It's awfully easy to write abstractly, without attaching much meaning to the big words. But the moment you have to express ideas in the light of a particular context, in a particular set of circumstances, although it's a limitation in some ways, it's also an invitation to go much further and much deeper. I think that fiction and, as I say, history and biography are *immensely* important, not only for their own sake, because they provide a picture of life now and of life in the past, but also as vehicles for the expression of general philosophic ideas, religious ideas, social ideas. My goodness, Dostoevsky is six times as profound as Kierkegaard, because he writes *fiction*. In Kierkegaard you have this Abstract Man going on and on—like Coleridge—why, it's *nothing* compared with the really profound Fictional Man,

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who has always to keep these tremendous ideas *alive* in a concrete form. In fiction you have the reconciliation of the absolute and the relative, so to speak, the expression of the general in the particular. And this, it seems to me, is the exciting thing—both in life and in art.

—GEORGE WICKES
—RAY FRAZER

*(This is the twenty-fourth of a series of interviews on the Art of Fiction. Other writers interviewed are E. M. Forster, Thornton Wilder, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Alberto Moravia, François Mauriac, Henry Green, James Jones and others. Future issues will have interviews with W. Somerset Maugham, Kingsley Amis and Jean Cocteau. We will continue our series on the Art of Poetry with Ezra Pound, W. H. Auden, Robert Frost and Robert Lowell.)*

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# HORSEMAN, 5:14

I am exhumed on the express
Out of the aftermath of five,
And though I starve on consciousness
Dead reckoning keeps me alive.

Transient, I ride, like sun on chrome.
Velocity, my brightest skill,
Sustains me like an ordered home:
Meaning is individual.

As the enigma deepens, I,
Who hunt on plains of sensory error,
Mete out the judgment of my eye
And multiply in finite terror.

My love is waiting near her bed,
Great shadows fall upon the West;
Train, freighted with tomorrow's dead,
Take me to fury, not to rest.

—MOORE MORAN

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# DE MEDICI SLOT MACHINE

These eyes an accusation.
Or quiet question
Containing its own answer.
This blownup, seer,
Black and white snapshot
That can not rot:
A noble youth of Florence
In satin pants
And ruffle, middle finger
Crooked in fear
Or elegant disdain.
Behind, a city-plan
That twists and turns just like
A toy train track.
Below the photo, in
A glass tin,
A billiard ball.
There are no frogs at all.
No tartar flutes.
No shellacked mandrake roots.
No crayon stubs.
No busted blackened corncob
Pipe. Nothing to snatch:
Not even father's watch.

Over on the wall,
A film strip: small
Heads of the youth, the same
Scar of disdain.
Another billiard ball
Above. It will
Not fall. There might have been
A folio, calfskin,
Goldtooled, of Plato's Banquet
With learned note
By Marsillo Ficino.

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This slot machine
Is 15 × 11″.
There might have been
A whip for flagellation.
Or seed for gourds.
At least some zealous words
From the convent
Of San Marco. Spent:
This world of stiff
Nostalgia. As if
There were no innocence,
Nor time, to lose.

—PAUL CARROLL

# LA SEÑORA NORTEAMERICANA Y LAS CUIJAS DE ACAPULCO

On the yellow walls of my patio
Five lizards lurk like sin, waiting for flies—
Women want love. In gay Acapulco
Love has a sticky tongue and staring eyes.

Oh, not by day, when confident on skis,
And lovely as a gull, youth flashes by—
It is not sunlight which unlocks the knees
Of gringas—though a hot day breeds the fly.

By night, by night, the little deaths take place!
Now women, waiting, hear the screams of flies—
O lonely ones, who crouch before that face,
Your lovers glide my walls without disguise.

—W. G. VAN KEUREN

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# *Malcolm Lowry*

I saw Lowry only once, that time thirteen years ago, when as an unknown author he arrived in New York as a kind of herald for a novel he had finally finished. Between the man and his art falls the shadow, but if there is an exception, it was Lowry and his *Under the Volcano*. There was no space between them, no room for a shadow. The identical pressures were in both, the same unrelenting intensity.

Had I known a more fruitless and tormented time than my hours with Lowry? I don't think so. The mask he wore revealed nothing and told all. One needed only to recall the two brothers in the novel, the two halves of Lowry, to guess what wildness, melancholy, passion, hopelessness, tore him from within. The mask, the unblinking eyes, were a prerequisite for survival, but it was impossible for the mask to stay in place for long. Nearly finished novels were burned up in fires whose beginnings one didn't want to know about. Then the mask came off permanently, three years ago: death by "misadventure" it was called.

When I saw him standing, that time, feet planted wide apart, in a friend's apartment as though the floor boards were a deck of a rolling ship, I had no idea then that his grandfather was a windjamming sea captain, that he himself was sea-proud, and had shipped out, after chucking up school (returning later to graduate from Cambridge in 1932), to work his way to China. After, came Russia, Mexico, British Columbia. Stops and starts, the long voyage home (he had discovered O'Neill as a schoolboy), to what? I cannot imagine: his diverse hearts were no haven. In Lowry, though, one feels both journeys are the same, exterior and interior. That is why the work that follows, a "Journal" called *Through the Panama*, and kept by a fictional character named Sigbjørn Wilderness (who is nevertheless Malcolm Lowry), is so extraordinary: it is a scrupulous log and a work of the imagination at once, a record of a ship's passage and a poem, the mixture so inventive, so natural, that it is impossible to categorize.

The journal is fresh, pure Lowry: "A flying fish skidding over the sapphire sea toward an albatross floating to meet it: ecstasy." Bitter: "It is wrong to suppose the poor old Liberty ship hasn't got

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a soul by this time, just because she was thrown together in 48 hours by washing machine makers. What about me? – thrown together by a cotton broker (Lowry's father) in less than 5 minutes. 5 seconds perhaps." Witty: "Description of sunset: sailing into boiling Quink. Magenta scarves to starboard: from the galley, a smell of loaves, to the right, vermillion spare ribs; aft, a sort of violet porridge." Ironic: "Brilliant comment of a person to whom I once lent *Ulysses* on returning it the next day. 'Thanks awfully. Very good.' " Revelatory: "Going down the coast of Guatemala, we crossed the border from Mexico in late afternoon. Coast is tame here, the mountains rounded, green and pretty, now and then a river flows." A tranquil vista, you might say, repose at last for the burning eye and brow, but no: the keeper of the log continues: "I wish could see it with volcanoes spitting fire into the night." There it ineluctably is: the furies have spoken.

This voyage with Wilderness-Lowry is not quite *A Season in Hell* – it is more open, there are lovely escape hatches – but it can be thought of as *A Season in Purgatory*. What a voyage it is! – pushing off from Vancouver to hug the Pacific coastline on a southerly course, all the way down to the Canal (the best description of it one could possibly find), and to slip through de Lesseps' forty-mile ditch, finally to exchange one ocean for another. An American Liberty ship, its engine sings in French:

*Frère Jacques*
*Frère Jacques*
*Dormez-vous?*
*Dormez-vous?...*

but then, though the engine's music remains constant throughout the voyage, the lyrics inevitably suffer a change:

*...sonnez lamentina*
*sonnez lamentina*
*dong dong dong*
*doom doom doom*

To investigate Purgatory with such a dolorous guide is hazardous, but it is also contemporary and compensating. Neither so calm or orderly as the older Virgil, Lowry nevertheless made his ascents from Hell and his descents from Heaven. He was Blake's clod and pebble both, building a Heaven in Hell's despair and a Hell in Heaven's despite. He lived in between, knowing both extremes too well.

—HARVEY BREIT

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MALCOLM LOWRY

# THROUGH THE PANAMA

## From the Journal of Sigbjørn Wilderness

*Frère Jacques*
*Frère Jacques*
*Dormez-vous?*
*Dormez-vous?*
*Sonnez les matines!*
*Sonnez les matines!*
*Ding dang dong*
*Ding dang dong...*

This is the ship's endless song.

This is the engine of the Diderot: the canon repeated endlessly...

Leaving Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, midnight, November 7, 1947, S.S. Diderot, for Rotterdam.

Rain, rain and dark skies all day.

We arrive at dusk, in a drizzle. Everything wet, dark, slippery. Dock building huge, dimly lit by tiny yellow bulbs at far intervals. Black geometry angled against dark sky. Cluster lamps glowing—they are loading cardboard cartons labelled *Product of Canada.*

(This morning, walking through the forest, a moment of intense emotion: the path, sodden, a morass of mud, the sad dripping trees and ochreous fallen leaves: here it all is. I cannot believe I won't be walking down the path tomorrow.)

Primrose and myself are the sole passengers aboard the freighter. The crew are all Bretons: the ship, French: its build, American. A Liberty ship about 5000 tons, 10 knots, electric welded hull.

Longshoremen leave: skipper comes aboard. Sense of departure increases. Nothing happens for hours. We drink rum in cabin: Chief Gunner's cabin, between skipper and wireless

*—Drawings by J. F. Ulysse*

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operator. Primrose wearing all her Mexican silver bracelets, calmly tense, electrically beautiful and excited.

Then: the Immigration officers, very courteous and cheery. All had cognac together in the skipper's cabin.

Then: bells rang, hawsers were cast off, shouts from bridge: slowly, suddenly, we were moving. The little strip of black, oily water widened... The black cloudy sky was breaking and stars were brilliant overhead.

The Northern Cross.

*Nov. 8.* High salt wind, clear blue sky, hellishly rough sea (zigzagged with a lashing tide rip) through the Juan de Fuca Strait.

—Whale geometry of Cape Flattery: finny phallic furious face of Flattery.

Cape Flattery, with spume drenched rocks, like incinerators in sawmills.

—Significance of sailing on the 7th. The point is that my character Martin, in the novel I'm furiously trying to get a first draft of, (knowing damned well I'd never do any work on this voyage, which is to last precisely 7 weeks) had dreaded starting a journey on the 7th of any month. To begin with we were not going to leave for Europe until January. Then the message comes that our sailing has been canceled and we'll have to take advantage of the Diderot's sailing on the 6th if we want to go at all. But she doesn't—she sails on the 7th. Martin Trumbaugh's really fatal date is November 15. So long as we don't leave Los Angeles on Nov. 15 for the long haul, all will be well. Why do I say that? The further point is that the novel is about a character who becomes enmeshed in the plot of the novel he has written, as I did in Mexico. But now I am becoming enmeshed in the plot of a novel I have scarcely begun. Idea is not new, at least so far as enmeshment with characters is concerned. Goethe, Wilhelm van Sholz, "The Race With a Shadow." Pirandello, etc. But did these people ever have it happen to *them?*

Turn this into triumph: the furies into mercies.

—The inerrable inconceivably desolate sense of having no right to be where you are: the billows of inexhaustible anguish haunted by the insatiable albatross of self.

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There is an albatross, really.

Martin thought of the misty winter sunrise, through the windows of their little cabin; the sun, a tiny little sun, framed in one of the window panes, like a miniature, unreal, white, with three trees in it, though no other trees were to be seen, and reflected in the inlet, in a high calm icy tide. Fear something will happen to house in our absence. Novel is to be called, Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid. Keep quiet about house or will spoil voyage for Primrose. Intolerable behaviour: remember Fielding with dropsy, being hauled on board in a basket on voyage to Portugal. Gentleman and sense of humor. Had himself tapped for water every now and then. H'm.

This desolate sense of alienation possibly universal sense of dispossession.

The cramped cabin one's obvious place on earth.

Chief Gunner's Cabin.

Curious agony of not having tipped steward. Whom to tip? Not wishing to insult anybody.

Strindberg's horror at using people. Using one's wife as a rabbit for vivisection. Seems more honorable to use yourself. This idea unfortunately not new either.

Fitzgerald would have been saved by life in our shack, Martin thought (who had been reading *The Crack Up*). The Last Laocoön. Impossible to find anybody less like Fitzgerald than Martin. Sad that F. hated the English. To my mind his latter work represents essentially best qualities of chivalry and decency now too often lacking in the English themselves. This quality true essentially of soul of America. Can this be expressed without obsequiousness? Or good manners, with fidelity to the ghastly façade of Deathpic and Spaceclack, pulpy enemies of the earth and mankind. Read *Alc*, the weekly boozemagazine, etc.

—Would like to express cultural debt of England to America. It is enormous, even bigger than our national one, if possible. But what use have we made of it? Public school boys fishing vicariously for Hemingway's trout. Or Deathpic and Spaceclack talk. The English are now so loathed in Canada we are rapidly becoming a tragic minority. Starve to death in

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Stanley Park rather than ask for help. It happens every day. Canada, whose heart is England but whose soul is Labrador. Of course I am a Scotsman. As a matter of fact I am Norwegian.

*Frère Jacques*
*Frère Jacques*

—Played by Louis Armstrong and his orchestra. Art Tatum at piano. Joe Venuti violin. *Battement de Tambours.*

And I think of O'Neill. *Iceman* is wonderful play. Wonder if similarity to the theme of *The Wild Duck* was conscious, in which drink is justified as "life illusion." I wish O'Neill had written more plays about the sea. The Norwegian barque? My grandfather, captain of the windjammer, Scottish Isles, went down with his ship in the Indian Ocean. He was bringing my mother a cockatoo. Remember the story told about him by Old Hands in Liverpool. The owners loaded his ship badly: he complained: was forced to take it out. So he sailed it right bang down to the Cape, and right bang back again to Liverpool and made them load it correctly.

—"The man who went to sea because he read *The Hairy Ape* and the *Moon of the Caribees.*" (That was me twenty years ago. Accounts partly for my depression on board, Diderot is totally different freighter to any in my experience though. Liberty Ship—but really beautiful in my opinion, if of romantic slowness. Food is superb; and great gulps of *pinard* at every meal. A wonderful trip, really.)

—A lone black albatross, like a flying machete—strictly 2 machetes... Albatross like a distant lone left wing three quarter at rugby, practising...

An iron bird, with sabre wings. Actually *is* black albatross, though captain says no.

But the captain, for once, is wrong. It is not a shearwater, though there is a sooty shearwater behind, Primrose says. Melville's hatred of shearwaters: birds of bad omen. Nonsense. Hope we do not sail on the 15th of November from Los Angeles.

We have crossed the border and are off the State of Washington.

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ALBATROSS SLAIN, BRINGS GRIEF, PAIN

(Excerpt from a fragment of newspaper, left by steward in cabin):

Shaft Snapped, Leg Broken, Net Fouled
When Sea Tradition Defied.

Port Angeles, Wash. (A.P.)—A university of Washington faculty member who defied the tradition of the sea knows better now. His sad story came to light when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's exploratory vessel put in here. The university research assistant, John Firmin, started it when he sighted a white albatross flying near the vessel, engaged in exploratory deep sea trawling off Cape Flattery. Firmin asked permission to shoot it and bring it to the university museum as the first known specimen of a white albatross seen in Washington coast waters.

Crew Horrified.

The seven crew men immediately shouted "No!" reminding Firmin of the fate of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and the old tradition of bad luck which follows shooting an albatross. But because of the speciman's rarity—etc.

See, conversely, newspaper clipping I've been saving:

Sydney, Friday. An English seaman who fell overboard from a liner owes his life to an albatross. It landed on his chest and guided a lifeboat to him.

Seaman John Oakley, 53, of Southampton, fell from the stern of the 20,204 ton Southern Cross 10 miles off the New South Wales coast yesterday.

A little boy, a passenger, saw him fall and told the deck officer. The ship turned about and a lifeboat was lowered.

Oakley was obscured by waves until the albatross landed on his chest and served as a beacon to the rescuers.—Reuters.

—The albatross is one of the largest flying birds in the world with a wing span of 10 ft—12 ft and weighs about 17 pounds.

Now there are three shearwaters.

Golden sunset in a blue sky.

Several large green meteors from Gemini.

*Nov. 9.* Primrose and Sigbjørn Wilderness are happy in their cramped Chief Gunner's cabin.

Martin Trumbaugh however is not very happy.

Trumbaugh: named after Trumbauer—Frankie. Beiderbecke, et al.

A dead storm petrel on the bows, with blue feet like a bat.

Off the coast of Oregon.

Thousands of white gulls. The crew are feeding them. Will

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our gulls starve without us? Incredible jewel-like clearness of some days in November in the shack, a bell ringing in the mist. Mill-wheel reflections of sun on water, sliding down the shack... Such radiance for November! And turn the pine boughs into green chenille.

*Nov. 11.* The dramatic diatonic booming of fog horns, bells, whistles, on Golden Gate Bridge, in the fog, warping early in the morning into cold San Francisco. Past Alcatraz. Bird watcher who lives there.

Fog lifts: to the left, Oakland is dark, cloudy, bridge disappears into low gray clouds. To the right San Francisco, the sky is tender blue, the bridge arching away, incredible, with its cables and towers.

Skipper wearing fur-lined jacket, collar turned up, blue cap, formidable, with beaky profile against the sky. He is angry with longshoremen and shouting curses and orders in French and English. Pilot amused, bored, respectful. Various mates stand around tensely.

Brilliant comment of a person to whom I once lent Ulysses on returning it the next day. "Thanks awfully. Very good." (Lawrence also said: "The whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another.")

Leaving at night the jewelled city. Baguette diamonds on black velvet, says Primrose: ruby and emerald harbor lights. Topaz and gold lights on two bridges.

Primrose is very happy. We embrace in the dark, on deck.

*Nov. 14.* Los Angeles. A notice in a shed: *Watch the Hook It Can't Watch You.*

Warm blue satin sea and mild sun.

*Nov. 15.* Sure enough, off we go. Of course.

We have another passenger: his name? Charon. Naturally.

—Outward Bound, from Los Angeles to Rotterdam S.S. Diderot sailed November 15, in the evening.

(Mem. *Outward Bound*, seen at the Theatre Royal in Exeter with my mother and father in 1923. Eight bells ring up each curtain. Wonderful performance by Gladys Ffolliot.)

S.S. Tidewater, a black glistening oil-tanker, very close, empty: red rails: Marie Celeste?

Description of sunset: sailing into boiling Quink. Magenta

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scarves to starboard: from the galley, a smell of loaves, to the right, vermillion spare ribs: aft, a sort of violet porridge.

FRÈRE Jacques

FRÈRE Jacques

Gulls blowing: silhouettes. And more shearwaters.

Sailing close into a black mountainous coast of clouds, with stars over them.

And Mr. Charon, he's there too.

*Nov. 16.* We have crossed the border in the night.

—At sunset, leaden clouds, black sky, with a long line of burning vermillion like a forest fire 3,000 miles long, far away between black sea and sky.

Strange islands, barren as icebergs, and nearly as white.

Rocks!—The Lower California coast, giant pinnacles, images of barrenness and desolation, on which the heart is thrown and impaled eternally...

Frère Jacques. Frère Jacques Laruelle.

*Baja* California. In fact, Mexico to port. Thousands and thousands of miles of it.

—But nothing equalled now the inconceivable loneliness and desolate beauty of the interminable Mexican coast, (down which the freighter now slowly made its way) with the furnace of the ship saying *Frère* Jacques: *Frère* Jacques: *dor*mez-vous: *dor*mez-vous, and a single lone digarilla floating, turning, against the purple frightful coast, and the sunset of misery—

dormez-vous
dormez-vous
sonnez *lament*ina
sonnez *lament*ina
dong dong dong
doom doom doom

The digarilla is the bosun bird, or frigate bird, or man-o'-war bird, with a tail like a swallow: it is a bird of ill omen in Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid. It was a bird of ill omen to Primrose and me in Acapulco three years ago. Yet one week after that The Valley of the Shadow of Death was accepted. The Book will be divided into three parts, three

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novels. Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid, Eridanus, La Mordida. Eridanus is a sort of typical intermezzo and is about shack in Canada. Dark as the Grave is about the death of Fernando, who is Dr. Vigil in the Valley of the Shadow. *Real* death that is, we discovered. La Mordida, The Bite, is set in Acapulco. The Valley of the Shadow worked like an infernal machine. Dr. Vigil is dead like the Consul—in reality that is. No wonder my letters were returned.

Someone has written an opera about another Consul. It hurts my feelings. This sort of thing is the theme of the book too.

*Nov. 17.* Mr. Charon looking at Mexico.

Daemon on the job: 24 hours a day.

All noises of the engine set themselves to the tune of Frère Jacques (Martin thought) sometimes the words were "Cuernavaca, Cuernavaca" instead of Frère Jacques: the engine had another trick too, of singing

Please go *on*!
Why not *die*!
Sonnez les matines...

and what's more taken up by the ventilators, it would sing in harmony; I swear it, I heard aerial infernal choirs chanting in harmony, sometimes rising to a frightful pitch... And then it would begin again, saying something quite ridiculous, instead of ding dang dong:

*Sans* maison
*Sans* maison

and when it got literally into that groove it would never stop.

—The inability to breathe almost, as the heat grows worse —your mouth too becomes a sort of perpetual pulped vise, your face swollen so that you can scarcely open it save to mutter something inane, and always unfinished, like "I thought it would be—or—ah, please dear it—"

*Battement de Tambours*

Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid. Fernando is buried in Villahermosa. Murdered. He ah drink too much mescal. Mehican whiky. Alfred Gordon Pym.

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Title too long: why not just "My Friend is Laid" (Primrose suggested).

The distant inane motorcycle of the electric fan, whose breeze does not reach you, sitting below, watching the sweat pricking your hands, and seep out of your chest.

The crew are chipping rust: hammers on the brain.

White leathery pelicans in the afternoon.

Peaks like machetes, pointing down. Inverted swordfish. Barren mountains, sharp-finned, or peaked like cones. (Yeat's Vision?)

Waking in the night with eyes aching and twitching vision to wonder (for Martin Trumbaugh, for the Consul, likewise named Firmin, to wonder) where did I put my shoe, did I have a shoe, I did, and the lost one seemed in the right place, but then where are the cigarettes, and where am I? etc. Surely standing now in the corridor of a train vacantly; but then again the engine with its *Frère* Jacques, *Frère* Jacques, *Dor*mez-vous, *Dor*mez-vous: of course, you bloody well can't *dormez*.

I fear that was the consequence of a case of none too good American whiskey bought in Los Angeles because I liked its name, Green River. Even so, there is not half enough for this voyage. But perhaps the captain would ask Sigbjørn Wilderness and his wife on to the bridge for an aperitif.

*Nov. 18.*—the long long dead cruel sorrowful uninhabited coast of Mexico.

Frère Jacques.

Wake at 3 A.M., stumble around dark cabin. Where am I?

5 A.M. Primrose goes out to watch dawn. Indigo sea, black tortured shapes of mountains and sharp-pointed islands, a beautiful nightmare against a gold sky. For two hours we pace and weave, in and out, out and in, from cabin to deck. Try to sleep and cannot. Too close to Mexico?

Day becomes stinking hot and still. Coast faded out of sight. We are crossing the mouth of the Gulf of California. The crew are painting ventilators, wearing wooden shoes.

The skipper says they are "beautying up the ship."

—at sunset, the Tres Marias Islands, two ships, three frigate birds, jet against amber sky, clouds like boiling cauliflower by Michelangelo: and later, the stars: but now Martin saw the

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In his loneliness and fixedness the Ancient Mariner yearneth toward the journeying moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

fixity of the closed order of their system: death in short. The thought comes from Keyserling. (They are only *not* dead when I look at them with Primrose.) Wonderful truth in Lawrence about this. "Somehow my life draws (he writes) strength from the depths of the universe, from the depths among the stars, from the great world!" Think Primrose feels something like this. And how true was that of them in Eridanus! But he can only get the feeling vicariously on board this ship, as it takes him away inexorably from the only place on earth he has loved, and perhaps forever.

Our Mr. Charon, Mr. Pierre Charon, is a Frenchman, but acting Norwegian Consul in Papeete, Tahiti. An excellent fellow. He will take boat from Cristobal. *Bon-vivant.* Wears shorts and high white stockings and calls Henry Miller an atom bomb. Also was in foreign legion and goose-steps on the foredeck every now and then. Also he says: *Vous n'avez pas de nation. La France est votre mère. Soldat de la Légion Etrangère.* Now who in the world said that before? Why no one but a character in The Valley of the Shadow of Death. And you know what happened to the Consul at that point, don't you, observed Sigbjørn Wilderness, helping himself to his fourth sarsparilla.

—Man not enmeshed by, but *killed* by his own book and the malign forces it arouses. Wonderful theme. Buy *planchette* to provide for necessary dictation.

—Death takes a holiday. On a Liberty Ship.

—Or does he? All day I can hear him "cackling like a pirate." Robert Penn Warren's phrase. Charon is really a good fellow too, offers us cognac says I look like Don José in my bandana handkerchief tied round my head. But the Captain does not invite him on the bridge for an aperitif however *like he did us.* Case of two masters looking at each other face to face. And by the way, who is Don José? The chap who murders Carmen?

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Everyone talks so fast I can't hear a word: admirable crew.

The book should not be 3 books but 6 books, to be called The Voyage That Never Ends, with the Valley in the middle. The Valley acts like a diabolic battery in the middle. Resolution should be triumphant, however. That is to say it is certainly in my power to make it so.

*Nov. 19—or 21?* The French Government falls: our little princess is married. Gallantly, the French crew drink the health of Princess Elizabeth. The radio reporter, Charpentier, reads long radio report at dinner for our benefit: his English is peculiar:

"And at that moment Lord Mousebatten..."

"At *Book*ing'am Palace..."

They don't intend any offence.

These Bretons are wonderful sailors; chivalrous and kindhearted people to a man.

Englishmen who pride themselves on speaking French, snazzily being great judges of wines, referring to "my friend, the best cook in Normandy, of course," with the object of discrediting American salads. Did you ever meet a Frenchman who prettied up his English or was a good judge of a tankard of bitter and a steak and kidney pudding?

'ut the curse iveth for him n the eye of he dead men.

—But I dream of death, a horrible dream, Grand Guignol, without merit; but so vivid, so palpable, it seemed to contain some actual and frightful tactile threat, or prophesy, or warning: first there is dissociation, I am not I, I am Martin Trumbaugh. But I am not Martin Trumbaugh or perhaps Firmin either, I am a voice, yet with physical feelings, I enter what can only be described—I won't describe it, with teeth, that snap tight behind me: at the same time, in an inexplicable way, this is like going through the Panama Canal, and what closes behind me is, as it were, a lock: in a sense I am now a ship, but I am also a voice and also Martin Trumbaugh, and now I am, or he is, in the realm of death: this realm is, rather

The Polar Spirit's fellow daemons, the

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invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong, and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance, long and heavy for the Ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth Southward.

unimaginatively, entirely full of noseless white whores and ronyons with pulpy faces, in fact their faces come to pieces when they touch them, like newspapers picked out of the sea: Death himself is a hideous looking red-faced keeper of a prison, with half his face shot away, and one shattered leg whose shreds are still left "untied" (because he apologized for this): he is the keeper of the prison, and leads him or me or it through the gates, beyond which is St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, *and the very room* (I'm not sure what he means) but Death, although hideous, has a kindly voice, and even sweet in his gruesome fashion: he says it is a pity I have seen "all the show" whereupon I remember the vaudeville show when I entered, that is to say I remember moving chairs (in the sense of moving staircases) on which one sat as at a cafeteria, and some of the ghouls were sitting on these chairs and some seemed to be performing in some way: he said this meant I was doomed, and gave me 40 days to live, which on the whole I considered very generous of him. How can the soul take this kind of battering and survive? It's a bit like the toy boat. It is hard to believe that a disgusting and wicked dream of this nature has only been produced by the soul itself, in its passionate supplication to its unscrupulous owner to be cleansed. But it has.

The Mariner awakes and his penance begins anew.

Must be something I ate despite eulogy to French cooking.

Martin woke up weeping, however, never before having realized that he had such a passion for the wind and the sunrise.

*Si, hombre*, that is tequila.

(This now seems ridiculous to me, having risen early and washed a shirt.)

—I am the chief steward of my fate, I am the fireman of my soul.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

Nothing can exceed the boundless misery and desolation and wretchedness of a voyage like this.

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(Even though everyone is so decent and it is the nicest crew one could have encountered, the best food, etc. And the Trumbaughs were of course having a hell of a good time, etc. etc.)

A shearwater, reconnoitering doubtless.

*Leviathan*, by Julian Green. The short story.

Acapulco on the beam, and I recognize it immediately—before the skipper indeed. There is Larqueta, with the lighthouse going past so slowly, and it even seems we can make out the Quinta Eulalia. Since passing Manzanillo, Acapulco is the first sign of any life we have seen down the entire Mexican coast. Almost from the ship, I can hear them shouting, attracting people to the *camiones:* Culete! Culete!

(This, Acapulco, is the place that is the main scene of my novel that I have been writing about these past months: and this is where Martin Trumbaugh meets his nemesis. This is also where Primrose and Martin, in 1946, saw the digarilla. One week before the acceptance of The Valley of the Shadow of Death. Which is when "it" all began to happen. Story of a man (Man himself no less) Joyced in his own petard. A sense of exile oppresses me. A sense of something else, beyond injustice and misery, extramundane, oppresses, more than desolates, more than confounds me. To pass this place like this. Would I, one day, pass England, home, like this, on this voyage perhaps by some quirk of fortune not to be able to set foot on it, what is worse, not want to set foot on it? Acapulco is also the first place where Martin ever set foot in Mexico. November 1936. Yes, and on the Day of the Dead. I remember, going ashore, in a boat, the madman foaming at the mouth, correcting his watch; the mile-high bodiless vultures in the thunder. And all this sombre horror is lying calmly to port, slowly going astern, innocent as Southend-on-Sea. That is also when the Consul began. Scene of first mescal is now abaft the beam. Intervening years spent writing it—happiest of his life so far, with Primrose in shack—and other things, mostly burned. I know what the feeling must resemble; exactly that of a ghost who revisits some place on earth to which it is irresistibly drawn. He longs to make himself seen but, poor hovering gas bag, cannot even land. (And last, at sundown,

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the skipper said innocently: "Look at the little Mexican boat going down the coast with all its lights on. A coastwise human soul. Isn't it pretty?") His feelings are equally compounded of a desire for revenge and an illimitable desire that can never be fulfilled. Feeling is also like excommunication. Infringement of spiritual rights of man. Where else may he pray to the Virgin of Guadeloupe? The Saint of Desperate and Dangerous Causes? Here. Filthy, mean little place. Acapulco is that. Certainly not worth throwing a tragedy at. But Martin Trumbaugh was passing the theatre of his whole life's struggle, his whole future life's struggle, if any, in this endless passage down the Mexican coast. Christ how those ferociously ignorant and mean and wicked little men made the Trumbaughs suffer, though, here—would like to get them, every one. The Minister of the Interior of Death especially. Country of the Absolute Devil. Protest to the United Nations. How many Americans, Canadians, murdered there every year. Hushed up, without investigation, to save face —whose? Some Mexicans just as good as others are evil. Don José—Ah, Don José, so that was the meaning of Mr. Charon's remark?—for example, at the Quinta Eulalia. Think of the risk he took for us. His charity. Mexicans are the most beautiful people on earth, most lovely country. Mexican government seems still controlled by Satan, that's the only trouble. All Mexicans know it, fear it, do nothing about it, finally, despite revolutions: at bottom it is more corrupt than in the days of Diaz. Mem: *Juarez in exile landing secretly in Acapulco...*

Culete! Culete! in memory. The little buses, and the shaking man and the blaze of beach at Pied de la Cuesta and the sharks and the manta ray as big as a drawing room. And the tiny brilliant tropical fishes at Culete... And Primrose's broken holiday, her first holiday in ten years. I'll get them for that, if it is the last thing I do, on paper anyhow.

and envieth that they should live and so many lie dead.

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Another digarilla. The bosun bird. Rapacious giant swallow of the Zapotecan Sea.

The mournful song of the crawling ship, that rose and fell; the heartbreaking endless purple barren coast against which the great lone frigate bird, with bat's wings and a swallow tail, ceaselessly falls, silently turns, and turns, and soars again.

*Nov. 20—or 21.*

FRÈRE Jacques
FRÈRE Jacques
DORMEZ-vous?
DORMEZ-vous?
SONNEZ les matines!
SONNEZ les matines!
Doom doom doom!
Doom doom doom!

If these things should be survived, Martin decided, he must never forget, and write down, to the accompaniment of Frère Jacques, etc: for they represented to his mind the bottom of all sorrow and abjectness.

God help me.

Frère Jacques Frère Jacques dormez-vous?

Was it, Sigbjørn thought, that he did not wish to survive?

At the moment, it seems, I have no ambition...

Sigbjørn Wilderness (pity my name is such a good one because I can't use it) could only pray for a miracle: that miraculously some love of life would come back.

It has: apparently this retracing of a course was part of the main ordeal: and even at this moment Martin knew it to be no dream, but some strange symbolism of the future.

—The French Government falls again.

In spite of having spent the night wrestling with the torments of the d t's Martin Trumbaugh put in a remarkably good appearance at breakfast, looking bronzed and hearty.

"You are in good form."

"*Bon appétit.*"

"*Il fait beau temps*"... and so on.

(This gentleman with the d t's is not myself. Everything

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written about drink is incidentally absurd. Have to do it all over again, what about conflict, appalling sadness that can lead equally to participation in the tragic human condition, self-knowledge, discipline. Conflict is all-important. Gin and orange juice best cure for alcoholism, real cause of which is ugliness and complete baffling sterility of existence as *sold* to you. Otherwise it would be greed. And, by God, it *is* greed. A good remark: Guess I'll turn in and catch a little delirium).

A white dove comes on board.

And a jaeger flies by.

And the French Government falls once more.

The little church bells that chime the hours: for the curious thing about the ship's bells on the Diderot—they are slow, melancholy, like the infinitely sad bell-chimes from the cathedral in Oaxaca—Oaxaca, now to port, home of Fernando the Oaxaqueñian, and Dr. Vigil, dead, murdered in Villahermosa.

"For she is the Virgin for those who have nobody them with."

"Nobody goes there, only those who have nobody with."

"For she is the virgin for those who have *nobody* them with."

Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid. Where is his girl now, to whom he used to write his notes on old monastic walls? We should have looked her up.

Song for a Marimba

or

In the Wooden Brothel the Band Plays out of Tune

Oa-xa-ca! Oa-xa-ca!
Oa-xa-ca! Oa-xa-ca!
It is a name like
A bro-ken
A broken heart at night.
Wooden wooden wooden are those faces at night.
Wooden wooden wooden are those faces at night.
Broken hearts are wooden at night.
Wooden, are wooden, at night.

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Limerick

There was a young man from Oaxaca
Who dreamed that he went to Mintaka
And dwelt in Orion
*And not in the Lion*
The pub where he drank, which was darker.

A Prayer

God give those drunkards drink who wake at dawn
Gibbering on Beelzebub's bosom, all outworn
As once more through the window they espy
Looming, the frightful Pontefract of day.

—From this you might get the impression that Martin was a gloomy and morbid fellow. Quite the contrary. One of Martin's happiest private memories: a bit of conversation accidentally overheard about himself:—"The very sight of that old bastard makes me happy for five days. No bloody fooling."

It is my impression, from maritime law, that the ship can now go anywhere the Captain—or rather Commandant—pleases. He could play Ahab and get away with it. For France has no government. The crew, happy thought, might even mutiny if they wish, and it would be difficult for anyone—say in Oaxaca—to do anything about it. But the crew don't wish to mutiny for the simple reasons (a) this is a happy ship (b) they want to be home for Christmas. And as for the Commandant, who unlike most captains has the respect and liking of everyone, it is a matter of sublime indifference how many governments fall. She is indeed, as the chief steward (a fellow rugby enthusiast) says, a ship *bien chargé*. Would that the world were such. All shades of political opinion on board this ship: but I have yet to hear an unkind word. Now if we had a world governed by Bretons!

Turkish bath of the toilet: and *forgetting* where the flush handle is...

Terror, too, in the toilet, scarcely daring to stir, will the Captain object? Martin Trumbaugh wondered. Between two stools. And between two stools the breech falls to the floor.

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For Captain read Commandant: the Capitaine is the first mate of a French vessel. The second mate, the first lieutenant, etc. This has a naval, rather than mercantile flavour. The Commandant uses ancient regal privilege of dining alone. Wonder if my grandfather did that. From this you'd think the ship was undemocratic, nothing could be further from the truth, though. Everyone is equally courteous—first requisite of any democracy. Primrose's presence may have something to do with obvious manifestations of this: but the thing seems innate with the French. Nor do there seem any of the heart-breaking persecutions, petty snobberies, that used to pertain in an English freighter. As an old hand I can smell these things. I remember the eternal argument between the bosun and the carpenter as to who was the senior: in fact, the carpenter, though he is technically a tradesman. Also the poor fellow on his first voyage, so persecuted by the crew, he stood on the windward side in a storm praying to be washed overboard. To say nothing of the apprentice they kept in the chicken coop. By the time we got to Dairen (then Dalny and now part of Russia) half the crowd had the pox. There hasn't been a single case of V.D. on board this ship since it set off four months ago, says the 3rd mate, who acts as doctor and who should know. Something worth remembering, since the British have the idea the French invented it. Still, grandmother invented penicillin. Wisdom and sanity of having wine with meals for all hands. And same food for everybody. And wonderful it is: ten times better than on dear old American bauxite ship we went to Haiti on, though stores on return voyages, be it remembered, all come from America. On English ship, though food used to be better than its reputation, they went to endless trouble to see that we, as the crew, had especially "worse" food than the officers. I didn't eat a hot meal for two months on the outward voyage to China—1927. Things are probably better now. Only advantage I can think of we had, being a coal burner, with the aid of a tarpaulin, we rigged up a bunker hatch as a swimming pool. There seems no way they can do that here, and it is a pity for the crew. Stokers and trimmers—I have been latter—no longer suffer to be sure: there are none: but engineers and greasers—the machinists do, as

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ever, as a consequence of which—superb and sane compensation!—they are allowed twice as much wine with meals. (One of the consequences of which, we sit at the engineers table, not without having been expressly and courteously invited, of course.)

—Who am I?—

—A great black bird sitting crucified on the cross-trees, its wings so vast it obscures the foremast light: the Captain calls us to see it, says: "I will not shoot the eagle, or anything, I never kill anything, but—" "Shoot it! I should damned well think not!" says Primrose. It is a condor (Gymnogyps Californianus) with a 10 1/2 foot wing spread, and the sight one of the rarest in the world, for the bird, a sort of super-xopilote or vulture by Thomas Wolfe, is almost extinct; after a while it has vanished, as mysteriously as it arrived.

The Captain (the Commandant) likes cats, is a first-rate chess player, but likes to madden himself with some kind of contraption like a yo yo, drinks rum before dinner, sleeps in a hammock on bridge because his room is too hot, refuses to discuss politics, yet is in great tradition of Captain who not only loves but *is* his ship: at the same time cannot escape pathetic subterfuges of men longing for their homes and wives. Gets a ton of sand for his cats, Grisette and Piyu, each voyage. Admirable fellow, has been in sail, like my grandfather. Humorous, kindly, charitable, absolutely the best kind of person.

*Nov. 22.* The Gulf of Tehuantepec: sapphire calm, long, almost imperceptible swells, the surface like crepe (Primrose says). Flying fish of electric blue with dragon-fly wings, skitting and flying everywhere. Their sudden swift tracery on the water, Prospero skimming winged souls, much as a boy skims stones: and indeed their brief heavenly passage through the air is like our moments of happiness on earth: old turtle breaststroking past solemnly, turns a quizzical eye on us. Astral body of Wallace Stevens writing his wonderful poem about Tehuantepec... A flying fish skidding over the sapphire sea toward an albatross floating to meet it: ecstasy. Primrose in seventh heaven... The Zapotecan Sea... Just under the bow a

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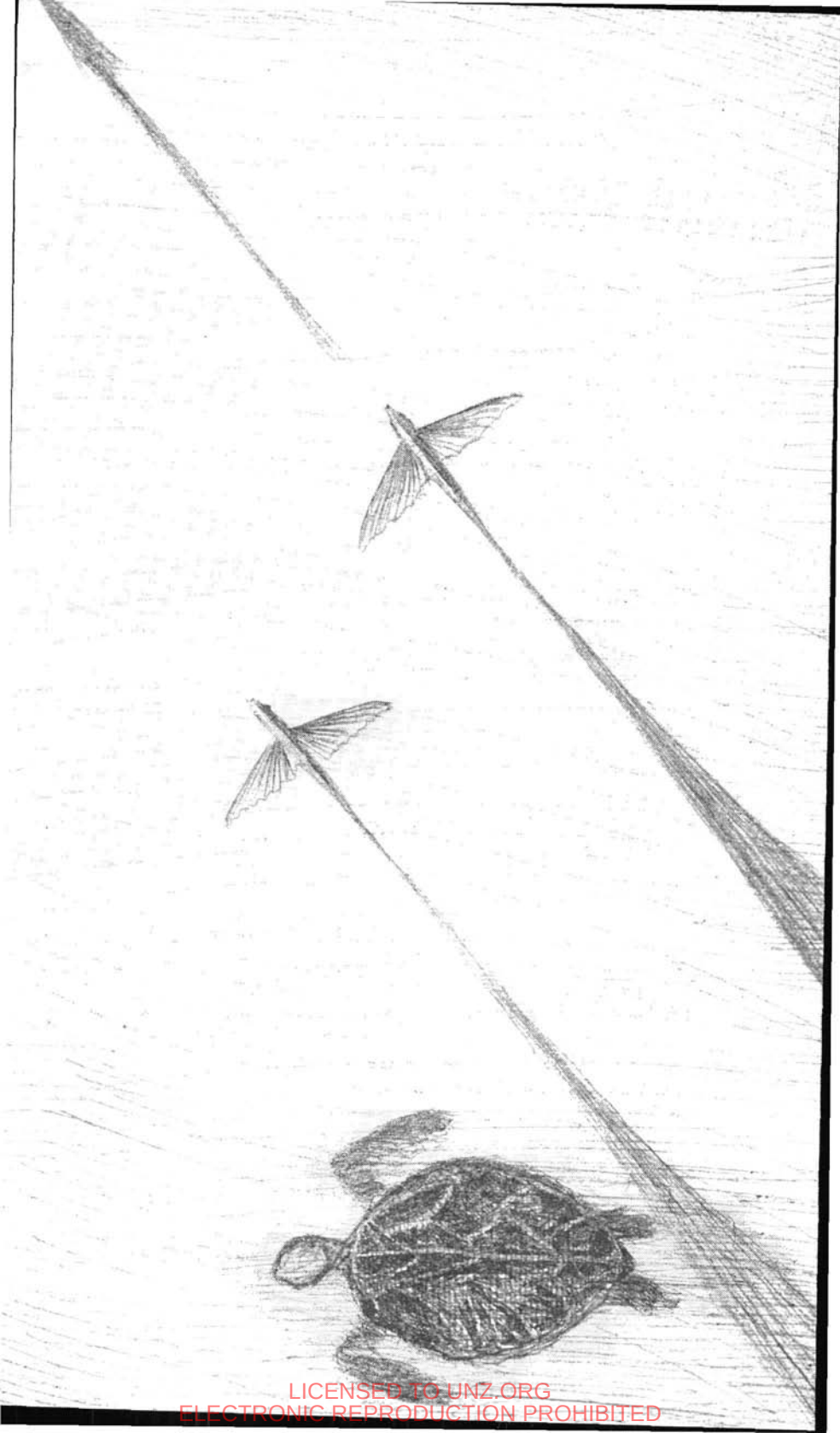

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shark—a dark, shining shape with wicked fins turning beautifully, swimming swiftly, then he dives, is green, blue—gone.

My faithful general Phenobarbus, treacherous to the last? (Note for Martin.)

*Nov. 23.* Going down the coast of Guatamala, we crossed the border from Mexico in late afternoon. Coast is tame here, the mountains rounded, green and pretty, now and then a river flows. I wish I could see it with volcanoes spitting fire into the night.

The skipper tells us a good story about his last voyage here: sweltering in the heat below: the volcanoes above cooling their heads with snow. The skipper, with magnificent hospitality, invites us almost every other day to have an aperitif with him, so that we have begun to look forward to this enjoyable interlude, nearly to look on it as a right.

The skipper tells another story: he found a beautiful Mediterranean island where he took his wife for a holiday: everything was perfect: a fine cheap hotel, good food, beach, swimming, and no one else there at all! What luck! But when they went to bed that night, they found out why: the rats. Thousands of rats, swarming through the windows and doors all night.

Primrose tells me: "I was sitting in the sun on deck when the Skipper invited me to the lower bridge for a drink. (You were asleep in the upper berth like the lion in the basket.) He is a friendly man, lonely and gay, stern, eager and boyish. I have mentioned the French crisis and he laughs and says:

"'I never hear the news. If they make another trouble I will run to Mexico.'

"We discuss cats. I say Piyu speaks French and he is delighted. The cats go to their box and we have a long conversation re cats' cleanliness: he points to Piyu and Grisette digging holes, doing, and covering them up; he is like a proud parent watching his child playing a piece on the piano, noting everything and calling my attention and applause."

However:

*Over the freedom of all people hangs the shadow of the Immigration Inspector,* with his little card (not always the little card) sent you in advance, (and his 5 children, his anxiety about his

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wife, his inadequate income, his fear of being fired, his allergy, and analogy, to the sprue, and his unfinished novel) asking you questions you never can answer viz:

Information required from Passengers in Transit through or destined to the Canal Zone of the Republic of Panama. Informacion requerida de los *Pasajeros en transito o con destino* a la Zone del Canal or la Republica de Panama...

(1) Name
Nombre Family (Apellido) Given (Primero)
Sex Race
Sexo Raza

(2) Birth date Place of birth
Fecha de nacimiento Lugar del nacimiento
Citizen of
Cindadeno de

(3) Occupation Embarcation port
Ocupacion Puerto de Embarque

(4) Passport no. Issued at
Pasaporte no. Expedido en
Visas for
Visado para

(5) Arrival port Name of vessel
Puerto de llegada Nombre del barco
Arrival date
Fecha de llegada

(6) Destination Ticket Date of departure
Destino Boleto Fecha de salida

(7) Address on Isthmus Purpose of visit
Direccion en el Istimo Objeto de la visita

(8) Date of last smallpox vaccination
Fecha de la ultima vacuna contra la vizuela

(And now come the insults, to be completed by the Quarantine and Immigration Officer.)

Reasons
Medical and Immunization
Disposition of passport
Remarks
(Initials)

History after Arrival

Departed for
Vessel Date (Initials)

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In this subtle way, the true freedom of every traveler is lost forever in his own world.

A sapphire sea. Would that one were a flying fish!

A turtle, swimming sleepily, is smacked by the boat but—he dives... Hope he is not hurt.

Whales spouting astern, just before sunset.

Strange to be sitting in the very seat of one's agony the day after, restored and in one's right mind, the miracle happened.

> Miraculous such nights as these
> Should be survived, how no one knows,
> Far less, how one reached finer air
> That never breathed on such despair.

I know you think Tennyson wrote that, but I did.

*Nov. 24.* Going down the coast of El Salvador—the latter out of sight however—usual angry looking slate elephants and jagged coasts of sunset, and the changing light on the sea, every bit like in the newest supercinema at home: fine old dirty freighter on horizon keeping up with us: at evening, suddenly, Venus...

ever and
through-
his future
an agony
nstraineth
to travel
land to

The agony of Martin Trumbaugh is related to the agony of repeating experiences.

Unripe bananas and Porterhouse steak coloured sunsets of Nicaragua.

Charon, lonely, peers with binoculars into the west. H'm...

Ahead are four storms. Thunderheads, snow white on top, becoming more dark and deep as one's eyes travel down until at a distance above the horizon the cloud bank is black, cut off sharply in a straight horizontal line, with the black sea below. Between are vertical lines, like pencil lines, of rain. The wind is blowing from that quarter and freshening.

Did I mention the new patented black oiled wind-

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lass, like a gigantic set of false teeth squatting on the foredeck?

A little albatross sitting on the mast, preening his feathers.

An elephant sitting on the horizon.

Venus swimming in a mauve cloud.

Engine that sings the Marseillaise.

Venus, with a circle around it, like the moon...

Engine that sings the Kerry Dancers.

Primrose... Primrose...

*Nov. 25.* Going down the coast of Costa Rica. Rain all day.

A plague on all Central American republics with their corruption, their cuteness, their dictators, their *mordidas*, their tourists, their fatuous revolutions, their volcanoes, their history and their heat!

The abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place.

ALARME

Le signal d'alarme consiste en 5 coups longs donnés par sonnerie et sifflet.

A ce signal:

— allez dans votre cabine

— couvrez-vous chaudement

— mettez votre gilet de sauvetage

— laissez-vous guider par le personnel et rendez-vous au Pont des Embarcations.

*Côté à l'Abri du vent*

*Abandon*

Le signal d'abandon est donné par 6 coups brefs suivis d'un coup long.

A ce signal vous embarquerez dans le canot No. 1. Tribord
ou 2. Babord

Selon la direction du vent.

*Cie. Générale Transatlantique*

Avis. S.S. Diderot (Sinister notice in saloon)

Chacun est prié d'économiser l'eau attendu que nous ne pourrons pas nous en approvisionner avant Rotterdam.

Au cas où le gaspillage serait trop grand, nous serions obligés de rationner l'eau.

Bord le 22 November 1947
1e/*2ème* Capitaine
(Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

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*Safety*

Your lifebelt is in this stateroom.
Put it on as you would an ordinary jacket,
Your arms through the shoulder straps,
Never wear the lifebelt without the shoulder straps.
Pull the two ends of the belt together across
Your chest and tie the tapes very securely.
(Wilderness Carlos Wilderness)

(Mem:)—Passing San Francisco, below Mount Diablo, going down past Monterrey and Cape Saint Martin, passing San Pedro, forgetting Point Firmin (sic) down, down, at 404 fathoms at Carlsbad on November 16 at 1,045 fathoms off Cape Colnet, at midday on the 17th at 965 fathoms, still going down Lower California, on the 18th at midday, having gone past Cape St. Lazaro (?) opposite Le Paz but still in the opposite peninsular Cape Falso (Cape Falso is good)—False Cape Horn good name for a novel—but disheartening—there *are* no False Cape Horns?— and Cape S. Lucas, going down to 1,800 fathoms opposite the Tres Marias, on the 19th, at midday on the 20th at 2,712 fathoms, below Manzanillo, by Black Head, on the 21st, just passing Acapulco, by Porta Malconado 2,921 fathoms—Acapulco!—and going out into the Gulf of Tehuantepec on the 22nd at midday 1,883 fathoms, on the 23rd—after the Gulf of Tehuantepec—opposite San José, at 2,166 fathoms, on the 24th near the Guardian Bank, having passed El Salvador, at 1,850 fathoms.

After Acapulco: B. Dulce, Pta. Malconado, Morro Ayuca (?), Salina Cruz, Tehuantepec, La Puerta, Sacapulso—getting into Guatemala—S. Benito, Champerico, San José, and in El Salvador, Acajutla, La Libertad, La Union indeed—passing altogether the Golfo de Fonseca—Corinto, getting toward Costa Rica...

Death in Life

—the albatross, at midnight, huddled upon the foremast, her great beak, from the captain's bridge, gold in the moving light: when her beak was there it made a third light. Finally her beak moved away and you could only see, from the port

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Their beauty and their happiness. He blesseth them in his heart.

side, her tail feathers. This was the mother albatross. She stayed there all night, while on the mainmast, aft, there were 3 other young albatross, huddled together, black... The mother albatross had brought her little brood on board to rest.

*Nov. 26.* In the morning one of these was captured for Primrose by the crew. The baby albatross sitting on the after deck, with its red feet and blue enamel beak and soft fawn-colored feathers, hissing at us. Then, to my joy, they released it.

Frère Jacques. Frère Jacques. Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?

The coast of Panama is like Wales. Old Charon would not come to see the albatross. After the capture of the albatross, there is further excitement, a ship on the horizon, that seems to be on fire; it is a Russian tramp, a coal burner?

Life in Death

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the Ancient Mariner.

The burning ship turns out to be just some old haystack of a tramp, that passes very slow, billowing smoke from her funnel, like some seagoing Manchester, or the funereal pyre of the ship in Conrad's *Youth*, nothing wrong with her at all: I am vaguely disappointed, having visualized some rescue at sea, in which one took a heroic part.

Bad news: due to the unexpected arrival of more passengers in Cristobal, perhaps Primrose and I are to be separated, into different cabins...

Death in life.

Facts and Figures on the Canal

Atlantic to Pacific length – 40 miles.
Minimum channel depth – 45 feet.
Maximum elevation above sea level – 85 feet.
Average time of ship transit – 8 hours.
Railroad time across Zone – 1 hour 25 minutes.
Canal opened to traffic – August 1914.
Total cost – $ 543,000,000.

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(Fear of anyone seeing me write these valuable war secrets down. Giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Which enemy?)

Idea for part of a novel: Make the Trumbaughs somehow have this happen to them, in manner of the sad experience of two other people on the last trip, as recounted by skipper. Devoted married couple who fear they are going to be separated, at Balboa, into different cabins. Decide to write some of this, to take mind of possibility off its happening to us. Can't even think of being separated from Primrose.

Sailing into Balboa under a full moon against a strong ebb tide, clouds like picked mackerel bones and loomy Hercules—the disastrous alien sunsets for the alienated, of travel.

(Martin was so distressed at the idea of their separation that for a while, as is sometimes the case in the face of actual disaster, he lost all sense of proportion, and for a moment indeed it was as if he forgot which was the more important, the threatened catastrophe of the separation itself, or the fact that having been unable to buy a bottle of Martell from the steward he was thus incumbent upon an invitation from the skipper for a drink which had never seemed more necessary and to which, since the skipper was the nearest representative of the company who had betrayed him, he had never felt more entitled: Primrose returned from the bridge without further news: and the prospect of the drink seemed even more remote, for the Commandant was now taking his vessel, against a strong ebb tide, under more

We are now approaching the Panama Canal
Francisco Pizzarro, a native of Portugal who began life as a swineherd...

I beg your pardon.

William Paterson, founder of the great Bank of England, who was on the contrary a native of Scotland, who began life by walking backwards through England, with a peddlar's pack on his back, having been impressed by the memories of a British surgeon, Lionel Wafer, who had crossed the Isthmus on the way to Peru with one William Dampier, an author and freebooter, and who had subsequently remained—like, later, William Blackstone—for some years living among the Indians, who had nursed him back to health from almost certain death, conceived, that is to say, William Paterson conceived the ennobling idea—no doubt feeling that in a vicarious sense this would be repaying the Indian's hospitality to the writer he so much admired—of capturing Havana and gaining possession of the Isthmus, and thus securing to Great Britain the keys of

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clouds to the west like picked mackerel bones, into Balboa Harbour: in spite of this responsibility of the skipper who could not obviously be drinking himself in these circumstances—an assumption in which he was proved to be mistaken—Martin strongly resented the fact that they had not been invited: after a while Martin had an angry drink of cold water and there was something very strange now in the transformation of his emotion about the drink back to the sadness in hand: after a while too, as if this drink had miraculously been hard liquor, Martin Trumbaugh's glass of cold water began to take effect... Nonetheless long after the ship had been anchored and was lying off the lights of Balboa, and the skipper had finished fishing off the stern, and had doubtless turned in, since his was the ordeal of taking the ship through the canal early on the morrow, Martin still found himself waiting futilely for their invitation, waiting, even though he had drunk at least two quarts of *pinard* at dinner in the meantime, and so his passions in that respect would have been thought partly at least to have been assuaged. But no: he was still on tenterhooks for the skipper's knock on their door, more anxious for that even than for the purser's knock, which would lead to the definite news of the disposal of

the universe, as they called it in those days, by which they meant that it enabled the possessor of those keys to give laws to both oceans and become arbiter of the commercial world.

Now this Paterson was a self-made man as who shall not say—however much we may pity him—that he was soon to become a self-unmade man also.

(I am constrained to mention that the majority of this information in this commentary I have obtained from the diverting book I hold in my hands, lent us by the 3rd mate of this vessel and called *The Bridge of Water* by Helen Nicolay, Published by, etc. etc. And I mention this because strange though it may seem I have never read a book about the Panama Canal before.)

Probably neither have you. It may be more intricate works on the subject are to be found in Tokio, in Moscow—certainly in Acapulco—and even Glasgow, perhaps even at the Unesco, but the homely touch, such as evinced by Miss Nicolay may well be rare. So my kind acknowledgements.

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their plight. My God, did poor stewards wait like this for a tip? Was this how, too, with this gnawing anxiety, Mexicans waited for La Mordida? A desire to go down and tip the steward immediately even if it meant getting him out of bed, assailed him and—)

Going out on deck Mr. Charon was peering through his binoculars into the darkness, in the direction of the canal...

*Nov. 27.* Waked before dawn—sky still gray, with a moon—by second mate: Immigration Officers are in *salle-à-manger* and must see our papers before boat enters Panama. Dress stupidly, half asleep, myself angrily apprehensive, but really hate all immigration officers too much to fear them, and stagger down. Captain *muy correcto* in elaborate white dress uniform with black and gold epaulettes, etc. drinking brandy with officers. Formalities—save that we don't get a drink—over in 5 minutes and we go on deck. Make amusing scene out of this with Martin. Ha ha. Digarillas floating round Balboa motionless. Dawn behind the Henry B. Tucker of Luchenback Line.

Going down, at 7 A.M., between buoys, passing, at buoy 7, going the other way, the *S.S. Parthenia*, out of Glasgow; emerald palm trees, a road house on piles blinking its light, to the right; very green to right and left, to the left

So at Bristol, we are told, William Paterson embarked for the Bahamas and the West Indies, where he made friends with the natives and buccaneers alike, teaching theology to the former and learning from the latter everything he could about the strange region in which he found himself.

(such as that there were no high mountains down toward the Gulf of Darien and that it would therefore be easy to make a canal at that point.)

Having developed this plan, says Helen Nicolay, he returned to England, hoping to interest the King, but disappointed, organized the Bank of England instead, though he soon withdrew from the Bank's management—perhaps, explains our good Miss Nicolay, because he had too many novel ideas to please the more conservative directors—and raising 900,000 pounds, founded now the Company of Scotland with a sudden upsurge of patriotism perhaps, because Scotland and England were not—as now—at that time united.

So in the year 1698 William Paterson sailed with 1,000 colonists on what came to be known as the Darien Expedition, landing in this region made famous by

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an island like a cupcake, completely flat, marshy land and a stretch of emerald jungle like chicory salad, and palms, with white houses showing through and what looks like a nice beach, buoys like little Eiffel Towers—ahead, the green light marks the first *écloue* (lock)—really beautiful beach to the left now beneath the chicory salad round the corner; Balboa to the right as we approach first buoy, palm trees and objects that look like country clubs, golf courses; left it gets more jungley—20 or 30 frigate birds sailing motionless, circling—docks to the right, then a launch comes alongside and 20 negroes carrying canvas bags climb up a pilot ladder.

*Orion:* old type American battleship and submarine.

Quite cool going through the canal—then to the right mud flats, a beached houseboat, striped stakes of an indeterminate purpose, then something innocent like a grove of alders at home: 1,000,000 country clubs or brothels beyond these; lighthouse like a chessman, ashore snowy egrets standing on mudflats by gigantic drainpipes with this same background of chicory salad. The Canal now looks like a narrow, casual creek with muddy banks.

Swallows twittering on our masts and round our aerials, playing on the maintop, swallows sky-

Balboa and Pedrarias—as in a different way by Keats—where he no doubt made friends once more with the natives and buccaneers alike, teaching theology to the former and learning from the latter everything that he could about the strange region in which he fo undhimself—another traveller in the realms of gold—and in which, to make it seem more familiar, they called their colony Caledonia, (much as later they called the region that is now British Columbia, New Caledonia) and the town they founded New Edinburgh. But the Spaniards, perhaps not approving of the theology, were unfriendly, and the Indians, perhaps not liking the name New Edinburgh, in addition to not approving of the theology, became downright disgusted.

But at this point the story becomes tragic—Fever; hundreds died, including poor Paterson's wife and child. While Panama and Cartagene gathered land and sea forces to expel the unwanted New Caledonians, and the English King, partly to placate Spain and partly the British merchants, forbade any kind of assistance whatever to the Darien colony from the Governors of Virginia, New England, Jamaica, The Barbadoes and New York.

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larking—and a long-tailed grackle.

Gigantic frigate birds—digarillas—common as vultures in Mexico here, curious sense of land, birds singing.

Locks.

The first lock: Miraflores: 1913. Gigantic iron-studded gates very high but looking too narrow for a ship to steer into—but we do. Amuse Primrose by telling her silly *Punch* story of two country folk in London underground for first time. "Coo, Martha, look at that, bang in the 'ole every time!"

We ascend 54 feet through double lock.

1,000 birds of bad omen.

Second lock: Pedro Miguel: 1913.

We ascend 31 feet in second, single lock (symbolic) in 10 minutes.

More salad with stuff like scarlet acacia and flamboyants. *Hombres* shouting, doubtless for La Mordida.

Culebra Cut.

Blackest history of canal's horror, failure, collapse, murder, suicide, fever, at Culebra Cut. Now one glides through a narrow canal, gorgeous jungle like a wall on both sides, 2 minutes lost here would mean death, or a very peculiar new life—monkeys, birds, orchids, sinister orchestrations from the jungle. Hot here as a Turkish bath in hell. Jungle has to be chopped back every day.

Finally Paterson was driven almost insane—and the colony forced to abandon itself—and so, says Miss Nicolay, *in mid-ocean the disbanded and half dead colonists passed a vessel westward bound going to their own relief*, who when they arrived also gave up the struggle after ten months. Today all that remains of the grandiose dream, she says, are two names on the map: Caledonia Bay, and Port Escosses. And for more than a century little was heard about an Isthmian Canal

For a great new era of enlightenment was dawning in the world. Rousseau, Voltaire, Adam Smith, electricity, Sir Isaac Newton, Halley, Linnaeus, Herschel, Whitefield, Swedenborg, Priestly, Oxygen, innoculation, the penny post, tramways and the South Sea Bubble. England with her plans to develop her American colonies and then with her efforts to subdue them. Peter the Great and Catharine the II in Russia. Frederick the Great in Prussia, the three Louis, the French Revolution and the dictatorship of Napoleon. England fighting against France. France fighting against Spain. France and Germany and Alsace. Spain fighting against Portugal. Sweden attacking Denmark. Russia attacking the Ottoman Empire.

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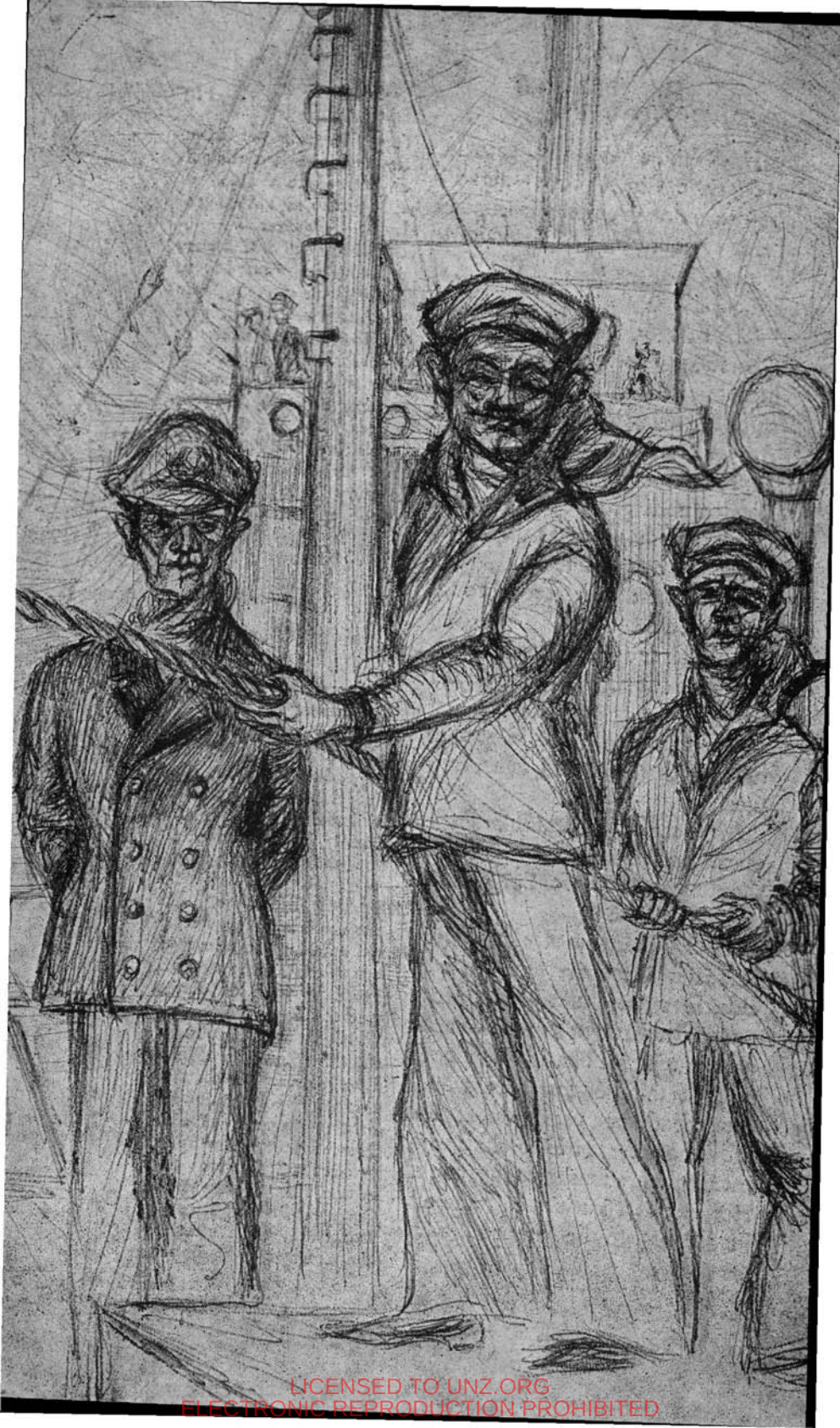

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Memorial tablet on a rock.

Apparatus as for foghorns, remote waterfalls. Besetting fear, as a writer taking notes, of being taken for a spy. Diving floats. Gold flags, dredgers, targets, and the lonely stations within each one a man peering through binoculars: high wiry towers: "Many bananas trees," says Charon, with his gutteral Turkish laugh. "Once there were many alligators, but not now."

ROBERT CHARON
Consul of Norway
Tahiti Island Society Islands

*U.S. Tuscada*, a dredger, visualize life on a dredger in the Panama, muddy water. Down the Panama Canal, all sorts of jungle, iguanas rattling on a rock, parrots gibbering, a train, quite like home in England, lumbers along the side of the canal, blossoms like honeysuckle, a kind of cactus.

A ship: *The Manatee*—London.

Another ship from London, all going the other way steaming very swiftly as with current. (Bergson.)

These rude London bastards of my countrymen give the Frenchmen the raspberry! I am thoroughly ashamed. I dislike Londoners anyway, coming from Liverpool, or do at this moment. "Courtesy is no empty form, but the assent to man's true being." The Mexicans

France fighting Russia. England, France, Holland, Germany fighting Spain—and then crushing Napoleon—and then England fighting Spain nearly all this time and in 1780 sending two separate fleets to the Isthmus, one against the Spanish colonies on its eastern side, the other to gain possession of Lake Nicaragua and the San Juan River on the west, and the officer commanding this second expedition was Horatio Nelson. But despite Horatio Nelson, who reported that Lake Nicaragua was the key to the whole situation, an Island Gibraltar, which is held by England would cut Spanish America in two, you would scarcely credit that so many people for so many years during

this long era of enlightenment could be so goddamned stupid, could be so ferociously ignorant, could have learnt so little, that they went on doing precisely this same sort of bloody thing. But that is what they apparently did, for this is what it says they did in this interesting book by Miss Helen Nicolay lent me by the 3rd mate. So that I personally, although an Englishman, or rather a Scotsman, and so with a

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for example... It was enough to make you weep, Martin thought. With shame, when you might have wept with joy. (Though perhaps they are only giving *him* the raspberry.)

Significance of *locks*: in each one you are locked, Primrose says, as it were, in an experience.

A buoy like a white swan and behind thick jungle, little green hills. The lighthouses like chessmen cunningly contrived to guide, the whole like a fantastic child's dream, or a sort of Rube Goldberg invention.

—Dead trees sticking right out of the water presumably on shore of old lake...

In Gatun Lake have lunch amid sense of unreality, as if on an engineless ship sailing through the jungle in a dream.

sneaking sympathy for poor old Paterson, who founded the Bank of England, am quite relieved to read where it says here where in 1846 the United States concluded a treaty with New Granada whereby it obtained exclusively rights of transit across the Isthmus from the borders of Costa Rica and down to the Gulf of Darien and promised in return for this to insure the neutrality of any canal it might establish and defend it from foreign attack which is exceptionally sporting of me since I mention nothing of an ancestor of mine who also had a plan for the Panama Canal that was very favorably received at a dinner given for De Lesseps in New York in 1884.

While as for poor old De Lesseps himself, (Martin said,—who felt himself without knowing why rather to resemble that gentleman—helping himself to *pinard*) seeing what nationality of vessel we are on, perhaps the less said the better.

For myself, while hereditarily disposed in favor of canals in general, while in short loving them—any child could figure one out, indeed it is the first piece of engineering a child does figure out—and in any case a canal here would have been arrived at eventually by some sort of Platonic sense of oversights—which is not to decry it as an achievement, (in that sense maybe I'm a bit envious) my feeling is bugger them all if they cause that much trouble, my sympathy being 150% with the troublesome San Blas Indians, whose territory occupied by their

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descendants to this day remains practically unknown. But I'm not of sympathy altogether with the two American gentlemen of wealth, George Law and William H. Aspinwall, who at length assumed responsibility for carrying the mails, if only because the latter gentleman gave his name to a town which in turn gave its name to a lighthouse which prompted a certain writer to write a story called, *The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall*, I shall have occasion to mention later.

Other people who in the history of the Panama Canal as reported here by Miss Nicolay I find myself particularly in sympathy with in their sufferings are some 800 Chinese—who were imported here to build a railroad—in sympathy not because they were Chinese, but because they nearly all committed suicide when deprived of their customary opium, an old law being invoked "*Which forbade this on moral grounds*," as a consequence of which "they strangled or hanged themselves with their long queues (this has now become a universal habit of the English) or sat down on the beach and waited for the tide to come up and drown them."

(How long I wonder is it to Colon? Or Cristobal? Or Aspinwall? And will we be able to go ashore there and get some liquor? Have the Immigration Inspectors gone? Or are they starting on the second bottle?)

Which reminds me that it says here too somewhere that when the actual work of digging began on the De Lesseps Canal, "this marked a season of festivity, to which Sarah Bernhardt added brilliance by journeying all the way from Paris to perform in Panama's playhouse": while meantime some Englishmen, who had evidently not lived in Liverpool, had the gall to write on arrival in Panama at this period "that it would be difficult to find elsewhere on the earth's surface a place in which so much villainy and disease and moral and physical abomination were concentrated."

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And that is about all—save for the persistence and foresight and skill and enterprise and heroism of its final builders, of course, which we take for granted, and La Mordida, which is always with us—save that this book tells us some things about the operations of the canal we perhaps wouldn't have known even though we're going through it at this moment. That our engines are locked and sealed. That our sailors—which is maybe why the chief engineer is on deck looking so hot and upset—are obeying the orders of the pilot. That perhaps we couldn't go through at all—for the water hyacinths would render navigation impossible—but for some dredging outfit poetically known as the "Hyacinth Fleet." That our good captain is only a decoration, temporarily, despite his epaulettes and his bottle of Martell—

After lunch the jungle looks like a gigantic conglomeration of spinach against the horizon, with occasional lonely wild familiar looking trees, such as one might see in Westmorland, under a windy cloudy summer sky...

The Last Lock.

Gatun Lock.

We descend 85 feet through triple lock.

*The Hawaiian Banker:* Wilmington, Delaware: rising from a grave of lock, as from Atlantis: Americans having wonderful time on bridge.

And ourselves, watching, happy, happy at the news we won't be separated after all.

Gigantic concrete street lamps as on a great boulevard, with grass walks, a lighthouse apparently on a bowling green, the sun beating

—and that man over there sitting on the control tower on the central wall, has a model of the canal locks before him, carefully built, which registers electrically the exact depth of the water and every movement of every lever and thus is able —ghastly image of the modern world—to see what is happening at every moment —and has possibly even seen me taking notes—

That great chain that is rising suddenly from the water, is doing so to prevent us from going too far forward, and that water swirling upwards from the opening near the bottom of the lock, is making us rise at the rate of about 3 feet a minute, soundlessly, and without orders.

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down ferociously in the foreground and beyond a little lake, entirely surrounded by jungle over which floated vultures, as a black storm was gathering: little isolated palm trees blew on the bowling green, and in the immediate foreground the vast ship from Wilmington, Delaware, slowly rising, blocking the view, elsewhere other ships were rising, or sinking, negroes were pulling ropes, and from the rising and sinking ships people were taking photos. Little electric cars were trundling along the wharf.

Where Kilroy had also been and a little American family stood, with black glasses, waving their hands (I wave too) the children eating all day suckers. A great hook dangling against the sky—three great ships on three different levels—the lighthouse now alone, the American flag flying, and the tricolour—and again now emerging, sun, dark clouds, concrete, the jungle and the lake disclosing itself once again: driving blackness now over the once innocent Westmorland horizon, little streetcar stations on the bowling green, and cable cars with cabins on either end (and a drum in the middle) like roller coasters—chute-the-chutes—and the xopilotes slowly slowly ascending into the tempest over the jungle—there were seagulls blowing in every direction: for we

That those small squat electric engines that are following us and which seem such a far cry from the camels of the Suez Canal are called "mules" and are attached by hawsers to the ship—

All in all though gentlemen, what I would like to say about the Panama Canal is that finally it is a work of genius—I would say, like a work of child's genius—something like a novel—in fact just such a novel as I, Sigbjørn Wilderness, if I may say so, might have written myself—indeed without knowing it am perhaps in the course of writing, with both ends different in character, governed under different laws, yet part of the same community, the one end full of boiler and repair shops, and the other full of clubhouses—with the jungle on every side, with the one end copying the other's worst features, which was a town anyhow of the Middle Ages, and where at any moment one expects to see ambulances carrying yellow fever patients, or piles of coffins lying on the dock but where actually all you see are these small squat electric engines called mules attached by hawsers to the ship—for it works, God how the whole thing beautifully and silently works, this celestial mec*cano—with its chains that* rise sullenly from the water, and the great steel gates moving in perfect silence,

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have reached the Caribbean Sea.

Danger—Capacity 4 Persons.

(Martin takes this to heart.)

An old negro with mackintosh, solar topee and rolled umbrella and gaiters limping along the lock wharf—why are there always these poor old men limping along wharves? ME.

And a lone loon diving in the last lock.

Looking back on it—The Panama—from the Caribbean is like looking back on a fairground with chute-the-chutes and great dippers: even the lighthouses contribute to the illusion, being something like the English helter-skelter.

De Lesseps' old canal goes off to the right into a swamp, a sad monument to unfinished projects, though actually *it is worse than that.*

Hot rain, coconut palms, pelicans.

Saying goodbye to Charon: dropping the pilot, after the passage through the canal.

—Whatever Cristobal may be like ashore—not a town but a dormitory as a friend of mine (J.L.D.) said—from the sea, in the rain, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, it is one of the dreariest places imaginable on God's earth; on one side of the harbor, a row of houses, all exactly the same type of architecture, and precisely the same in every detail, resembling square electric generators, with tin roofs, the

and with perfect ease at the touch of that man sitting up in the control tower high above the topmost lock who, by the way, is myself, and who would feel perfectly comfortable if only he did not know that there was yet another man sitting yet higher above him in *His* invisible control tower, who also has a model of the canal locks before Him, carefully built, which registers electrically the exact depth of everything *I* do, and who thus is able to see everything that is happening to me at every moment—and worse, everything that is *going* to happen—

And lastly, to the right, gentlemen—Cristobal, with houses described by Miss Nicolay here as perched on concrete pillars to outwit termites—making an interesting contrast with the legs of the beds in De Lesseps' hospital, which legs were placed in little cups of water to protect the patient from the crawling insects that instead of crawling liked to breed in these little cups of water prior to fliting from bed to bed, and from person to person thus to provide more patients for De Lesseps' hospitals. For this is the way civilization advances, so that now we have the concrete pillars of Christobal and rows and rows of electric-lighted dry closets screened in black gauze, with their

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masonry of some tanned substance, rimmed at the window lines with yellow, stand under the jungle, seemingly alone: surprised by that I turned my binoculars on Cristobal itself, where, although at first one saw what might have been an old Spanish building, with arches, suggesting arcades, I was astonished to discover that here too, lining the waterfront, were likewise these houses, row after row of them, resembling electric generators; turning my glasses now upon what, perhaps wrongly, I surmised to be Colon, I saw that this was also entirely composed of these electric generators half hidden by the murk: the only other objects of interest being a gasworks and what seemed to be a Methodist church, I now turned my glasses back to that section which, as if it were Fairhaven to New Bedford, I had first looked at the same generators, and leading from that, a long breakwater of broken stones with a skeletal lighthouse on it—Point Manzanillo—that now shone green (or red) later there were more passengers and farewell to Mr. Charon, "We will see each other, not in Jerusalem, but in Tahiti," he said, (what does he mean by that, and what is Martin in for?)—coming on board in the rain.

I had forgotten to mention that the tragedy of the Trumbaugh's woodwork painted white, instead of the legs of the beds in little cups of water which in itself was an advance in the days when Cristobal was once criticized for having too low a death rate. And talking of little cups of water I can see without being told that one is not even going to get a little cup of water here whether this is Cristobal or Colon (or even Aspinwall). Though here is a thing that is worthy of mention where Miss Nicolay says that the completion of the canal passed almost unnoticed. That plans of the United States for a naval parade were abandoned. For Nature does not celebrate her victories in noisy ways, she observes, but works silently, and when the task is done lets the consequences proclaim it. Which is something for all novelists to remember!

But I almost forgot The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall. And there he is. Or rather there he once lived. In the imagination of another novelist, over there, through the hot rain, somewhere in that direction, from which direction nothing shall be provided for our own illumination, though that was the whole point about the poor lighthouse keeper of Aspinwall. That in having another kind of illumination himself, he failed to provide illumination for his lighthouse, in

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separation had now been replaced by another; they were still to have their cabin as before, but they were not, on the other hand, to be allowed to go ashore in Cristobal; instead as has been seen, they dropped anchor well outside, the passengers were to come aboard by launch, it was rough and murky, and the skipper was planning to get away as soon as possible, as a consequence it was impossible to go ashore and get any rum or other supplies. For a moment the thought had flashed through one's mind that the American Amberjack (why not apple jack?) the boat manned by negroes running alongside the most closely and dangerously, with a bunch of bananas on the bow, could possibly be countermanded to go ashore and get some liquor, but the bananas—for one dollar—having been refused by the chief steward, the Amberjack turned off at a tangent and dashed into the murk again: the other launches that had been following dropped behind, and likewise turned away toward Cristobal, soon our new passengers were on board, we were waving goodbye to Mr. Charon, disappearing into the rain on the American Owl, and we were underway ourselves. Underway themselves, were the Trumbaughs, with their cabin, but no liquor.

fact went to sleep, which no lighthouse keeper should do even if spiritually advanced enough to have an illumination in Aspinwall. And so in imagination I ask you to behold, through that hot rain, the lighthouse made famous by the famous Polish author, Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose works are probably at the moment no longer on sale in Poland, though they will be, but whose great novel is even now I hear being filmed in Rome with an enormous cast of thousands and which some years from now will doubtless be seen by many in America—and appropriately I address you in America too, since it's your canal —seen not for the first time —though for the first time at such popular prices, ranging I dare say from $1.25 to $2.50 or nearly an English pound, to sit in a cinema. A project that while it might in fact have benefited Henryk Sienkiewicz would certainly have astonished Mr. Paterson, a Scotsman, and the founder of the Bank of England, even though he began life walking backward through England, and who first conceived the Panama Canal—All prices include taxes of course—And of course you know the book to which I refer:

QUO VADIS?

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Can it be imagined? Martin had little gratitude for this, and no sympathy either for the skipper, who had spent eight hours on the bridge: he scarcely dared let himself out of his room on to the deck lest he be asked for an aperitif, and miss the invitation. Finally he shaved, and as a final act of desperation, even, in the washbasin, washed his feet, a feat he had not attempted for many months, afterward making an attempt to cut his toenails, an even greater feat, doubtless not attempted for many years: and yet even these latter paradoxical preparations were being made, in a sense, for the aperitif to which they were not going to be invited. It was Primrose who finally broke down and suggested, as Martin gazed mournfully at a ship, on the gloomy horizon, the shape of the Empire State Building, that he should buy some wine from the steward. (Try and find reasons for Martin's inability to do this—and also for his finally sending Primrose to ask the skipper.) Sure they could buy wine. (But Martin, stingy bastard, wanted to buy *pinard*.) But the skipper was in the same boat as they were. Well naturally. Nor was he sure they would even be able to get supplies in Curaçao. But perhaps he would cable forward, radio forward, getting the Company to get in some stores... The long day dragged onward until dinner, at which Martin sat silent, drinking too much *pinard*—half hating it because he could *only* drink it at dinner—unable, almost, to speak to the poor Salvadoreans, and another gloomy personage, whom he had glimpsed through a door, putting on a pair of new wooden shoes. Was it imaginable, but even after dinner, even after the skipper must have long been asleep, that Martin should even think, still hesitating, upon his still relatively clean, if swollen, feet, upon the threshold, and still as it were waiting—God knows for what—that he distinguished, among the hoarse cossack choir of the wind, the electric fan, the engine and the sea, the word "aperitif, aperitif," endlessly, as if to the tune of Frère Jacques, repeated...

Silent on a peak in Bragman's Bluff.

Silent on a peak in Monkey Point.

—Keats could scarcely have written.

To the territory of LA MORDIDA—goodbye, and may Christ send you sorrow! (Well, I take this back: Christ has

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already sent you enough. May you live, rather, bloody Mexico, to afford to man an example of the Christian charity you profess, else the abomination destroy you!)

*Nov. 27.* But that was nothing to the torments, (while they were almost out of the Gulf of Darien, opposite Baranquilla—the little baranca?) Martin suffered on the next day, although he rose early, did his hardest Indian exercises, and cleaned his teeth—gingerly—for in the strain of creation—and also the urge toward cleanliness—of the previous almost liquorless day he had cleaned them no less than 8 times. It was a healthy day on the whole, spent mostly in the sun. On the other hand, it appearing likely that now they would stop in Curaçao in the morning, and not at night (as had been feared) but on a Sunday, Martin remembered that then all the shops would be shut, everything indeed save the church, the 4th mate inadvertently and tactlessly said "No whiskey no interesting." (In actual fact this remark pertained to a bleakly uninhabited island they were passing to starboard.) Later that afternoon, trying to study French with Primrose and the 3rd mate, in the windy *salle-à-manger* with books of matches and cigarettes blowing about, the red-faced engineer came in, angrily helped himself, out of the frig., to 3 glasses of wine. "Hullo, Mr. Wilderness." (earlier it had been Sigbjørn.) Later it seemed Martin heard his name being vilified: later still they had the same complication about getting wine from the steward: during this Martin remarked to the engineer: "*Il fait beau temps*"—"But if there is this *wind*," shouted the engineer, "then Mr. Wilderness won't be able to go ashore in Curaçao and get his whiskey!" What the hell. This suggested to me however to have Martin think that the story had now gone round. Later, the agony of inarticulate neuroses, the fear—perfectly imaginary—of rebuff: they get some St. Julien (Martin still vainly tried to buy *pinard* off the steward, who is now going to bake a cake on their wedding anniversary. But what is that cake going to demand of the Trumbaughs? The cake itself seems a nightmare. In spite of stars, wind, and sun, Martin had almost foundered in some complicated and absurd abyss of self, could only pray for another miracle to get out of it...)

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In fact, Primrose tells me, the Chief Engineer is furious with the wind because it may put us into Curaçao at night—where we only stop to refuel—and then *no one* will be able to buy liquor and everyone, including the skipper, is dry.

Seaweed like an amber necklace, Primrose says.

*Nov. 30.* Three days, plodding across the south Caribbean, off the coast of Colombia, past the Gulf of Maracaibo, the coast of Venezuela.

Situation in France is now serious, I read in Panamanian paper Primrose borrowed from our new passengers: 2 million on strike—no transportation—riots, etc.

## CURAÇAO

Sailing into Curaçao in the early morning. Low, barren, treeless, grassless hills with sideways peaks and the bright neat town. A sea wall—the Dutch just can't resist their dykes, says Primrose—like an ancient fort. But where is the harbor? The ships? Then suddenly we sail into a narrow channel, and bang! right through the main street of Willemstadt. Pontoon bridge sweeps open for us and the channel then opens out abruptly into a huge inland harbour with hundreds of ships.

In Curaçao, Havendienst II a black motorboat, and the beautiful swinging pontoon bridge across the canal—which is the main street—a delightful town, very clean and neat and Dutch, pointed red roofs, like a Dutch fairy tale sitting in the tropics. Olive-green water with a film of oil. Sea breeze stinks.

Having laid in a case of rum from the ship's chandlers we went ashore: Streets: Amstelstraat: 10¢ store, Pinto and Vinck.

Koninklyke Nederlandsche.

Stoomboot-Maatschappy N.V.

—and

Hoogspanning
Levensgevaar
Peligro de Muerte
Electricidad
Danger

We had a happy time!

—Seamen, visit your home: Cinelandia: Klipstraat (well named?): Step into Ice Cold Beer: Restaurant La Maria:

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Emma Straat: Cornelis Dirksweg: Leonard B. Smith—Plein: Borrairestraat: *Jupiter*—Amsterdam...

Angel trees like flat umbrellas.

In a street of strange solid Sunday-shut banks that remind me of Buddenbrooks, we took refuge from a shower in the Wonder Bar—a characterless place, with an open front, 3 tables (like an ice cream parlor, Primrose says) and a 6 foot bar: 2 negro bartenders speak English with a Dutch accent; this will be a happy memory, drinking Bols and feeling like Hansel and Gretel with the Sunday shower, the Sunday crowds outside, held up at the scything, sweeping pontoon bridge, and the great ships hurtling down the main street.

Back at the ship in the oil dock, all colors (and all smells) are on the water: surrounding the ship are something like sand dunes at Hoylake, only infinitely more desolate, more like slag-heaps in a Welsh mining town, or the worst of the desert in Sonora, Mexico, with the masts of 3 little frigates, as if wrecked, sticking up above small cliffs: the abomination of desolation. Oil tanks, the twin cupolas of a church, like Port-au-Prince, just rising over the roofs of the blue-gray, dun-colored, characterless, mud houses with windows like small black rectangles.

The entrance to Curaçao is the most dramatic in the world. Hans Anderson would have loved the town. There is a more enormous sense of sea and ships in Curaçao than in any other part of the world I know of, except Liverpool.

From where we are moored ten ships: Argentine, British, Costa Rican, Norwegian, Greek, etc. can be seen, with a wild background of oil refineries (factory chimneys) giving an effect of Detroit rather than of a remote West Indian island, beneath a rainy water-colour sky, showing patches of green. Taverns—Torrens? English ship. Rio Atuel Argentine Matilde unspecified probably Venezuela. CPIM—on pillbox-like tank.

*Dalfoun*—Stavanger (Norsk) *Jagner*—Goteborg (Swedish): *Clio*—Curaçao: *Plato*—Curaçao: pink-tiled roofs on the wharf. Verboden te Ankeren: S.E.L. Maduro and Sons: *Jupiter*—Amsterdam. Highland Prince: Seaman's Home: Casa Cohen: Club de Gezelligheid: El Crystal Photo

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Studio: Troost Ship: Chandler: G. Troost: Kelogovia: Joyeria.

Ridiculous mass exercises, people running up and down the long bridges of the ship, in shorts—probably very sensible—on board the Norwegian oil tanker.

It brought back to me the horror of "crocodiles," discipline at school; I try to visualize life on an oiltanker: the pure aseptic horror of it: almost better (it seemed for a moment) the clap-stricken death of the ships of Martin's own day...

—a letter came on board causing me much anxiety: my brother reports my mother is seriously ill in England. This is the first time I shall have seen her, as I still hope to, in 20 years. Last time I saw her was at Rock Ferry Station, Birkenhead, (where Nathaniel Hawthorne was Consul) when she saw me off on the London train. Where, alas, did she think I was going? Where did I go? But I never came back. Nevertheless I wrote, regularly, which was more than I did for myself very often.

Leaving Curaçao...
Frère Jacques
Frère Jacques
Dormez-vous?
Dormez-vous?
Sonnez les matines!
Sonnez les matines!

The entrance—now exit—of Curaçao harbor—on the Venezuela side: final impression of its sweeping pontoon bridge, its immediate sense of the character and originality of an individual people.

Now the desolate coast; a little lagoon, with a tiny church standing at the right of the entrance, a dun-colored hill behind that, wine-colored hill behind that, violet hill behind that.

A house.

On the extreme right (looking to port) are sinister lead-colored, gun-metal-colored tanks, each with a tiny polka dot in the middle (shadow like a man on one), like barrels of sawed-off guns, with oil tankers lying below, "where the goats wear green spectacles to eat the morning newspaper..."

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And a castle, with to the right a gigantic Montana-like bluff: more mediaeval castles rising up between oiltanks, a little lagoon with sailboats, going into a sort of wild Yorkshire moor...

Little shadowed islands at sunset; formations like Stonehenge.

Last sight: 3 lone angel trees on long long flat sandbar.

Reaction to magniloquent sunset.

—resolution—

*Dec. 1.* ...Situation now reversed: Martin wanting to invite *skipper* for aperitif, after getting liquor at Curaçao. Martin got a case of rum, only $20, thanks to skipper. "But why not two cases, Monsieur? I myself shall buy two, perhaps three at this price." Why not? Because Martin wanted to appear as if he did not need two cases. How wrong he was! How right the skipper. Already he can scarcely broach the case because he is thinking of wanting the second one they don't have—the skipper knows this too, that's why he charitably dodged having an aperitif with them. Nonetheless, Martin, who has acquired a mother too, doesn't want to use her as an excuse to get drunk. This sort of absolutely *bona fide* excuse supplied at such a moment is the dirtiest trick of the gods.

—Resolution!—

Other passengers.

The Hungarian from Nueva Mordida boarded at Colon. As I entered the saloon he was saying in answer to the El Salvadoreans, who have just said in Spanish they think I won't understand:

"And who drove you out then?"

"The police."

"And what had you done?"

The Hungarian, spreading his hands and lowering his voice as I approached: "Nothing."

The Hungarian drinks out of a private silver tankard, looks sadly at the sea, wants to sail a small boat on it.

"I go to Soviet territory..." He shrugs his shoulders. "Under Russian rule. Of course I risk my life, "But," he adds, "my family... And of course I am a sportsman."

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That's right, brother.

The Salvadoreans, tiny little people, a couple and their son, about 14 years old, seem Jewish, are wholly delightful: going to Paris. New Life. But I feel they have suffered some sort of persecution too—perhaps anti-semitic—*quien sabe*? Somerset Maugham would find out. But it's just curiosity that makes me loathe all writers, and incidentally prevents them from being human. Primrose and Señora Mai sitting in the sun on deck, twittering like birds and painting each other's finger nails and toe nails. Primrose chattering atrocious French and worse Spanish to the Señora, who speaks no English, and both laughing and giggling at Primrose's mistakes. (I myself speak terrible French and a sinister Spanish.) Later we play Parchesi with them and like them very much. (Snobbery of novelists whose characters always speak atrocious French and drink "something that passed for coffee.")

In addition: three Dutch engineers returning to Holland from Curaçao: Mynheer von Peeperhorn, Mynheer von Peeperhorn, and Mynheer von Peeperhorn. They too are delightful and kindly, but the only way Martin can think of opening conversation is by saying: Now as we were saying about Heironymous Bosch—so he says nothing. Alcoholics Heironymous.

*Would do for description of novels about alcoholics.* Alcoholics Heironymous, Bosh!

We are cutting due northeast across the Caribbean and tomorrow will be in the Atlantic...

*Dec. 2.* Our anniversary. At noon, in the distance, on the horizon, a lighthouse to starboard: Sombrero Island. (Mem: a story, very pertinent, about Sombrero: in Baring Gould) Am exceedingly grieved about my mother but it is no use thinking about it.

The Cake, survived, somehow even eaten, at lunch. Extra wine, too. Many toasts and congratulations.

We make the Anegada Passage and are in the Atlantic.

Seaweed like gold tinsel, says Primrose. Sargasso Sea directly north. Isle of Lost Ships, featuring Stuart Rome, Moreton Cinema, Cheshire, England, Matinee at 3 P.M. My brother and I missed 26 years ago. Now we enter the Western Ocean

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and the 4,000 miles before we sight land at Bishop's Point, at Land's End. But to what end?

The Atlantic Highlands—long deep swell. Atlanterhavet.

Montserrat not far away to starboard where I altered geography books by climbing Chance's Mountain in 1929, in company with two Roman Catholics: Lindsey, a negro, and Gomez, a Portugese.

One albatross.

Six bottles of beer on top of mountain.

Primrose says, "I'm afraid of this boat, thrown together in wartime by makers of washing machines..." But for myself, I like her, though she rolls worse then the ship Conrad loaded with one third of the weight "above the beams" in Amsterdam. It is wrong to suppose the poor old Liberty ship hasn't got a soul by this time, just because she was thrown together in 48 hours by washing machine makers. What about me?—thrown together by a cotton broker in less than 5 minutes. 5 seconds perhaps?

Another ship to starboard: Flying Enterprise. Pretty name.

*Dec. 3.* Great storm to leeward near sunset, sweeping diagonally past.

Commandant, meaning well, hunts out old American magazines for me. Old *Harpers*. Terrifying ancient brilliant and even profound article by De Voto on later work of Mark Twain. (Mem: Discuss this a little: problem of the double, the triple, the quadruple "I".) Almost pathological (I feel) cruelty to Thomas Wolfe. Would De Voto like to know what I think of him, in his Easy Chair, lambasting a great soul—and why? because he is a man—who, as N. might say, cannot answer? Mem: quote Satan in the Mysterious Stranger. And then on top of this obsession with Wolfe's weaknesses to come across a statement like: "I am, (I hope) a good Joycean." Why? To keep in with whom? Coming from De Voto it's almost enough to make you hate Joyce. And indeed I do sometimes hate Joyce.

—Reason for Thomas Wolfe's lapses, De Voto himself probably analysed perfectly elsewhere, about someone else he didn't hate, like De Voto: reason was Thomas Wolfe was in a hurry, knew he was going to die, like N., in same sort of

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hurry. And what about what *is* disciplined about him, his marvelous portraits, his humor, savagery, sense of *life*. There is far more sense of life actually felt in Wolfe than in all Joyce for that matter. I myself consider it unjust too to criticize Wolfe for seeming to have nothing fundamentally to say (as they say). He had not time to get a real view of life. A giant in body, he might not have really matured till he was 60. That he had not time was, for literature, a tragedy: and I myself feel that one should be grateful for what he has given us. Much to be learned in De Voto's articles however; agonizing about Mark Twain. Possibly De Voto had troubles of his own though, in that uneasy chair. Enough to give one delirium Clemens.

The sea is worse than before to me, its expanse, rough, gray blue or rainy, and without seabirds, says nothing to me at the moment: though well do I understand now Joyce's fear of the sea: (who knows what lives in it? Don't want to think about this—frightening thought occurred to me last night, when Primrose says I woke her up saying: "Would they put Mother back in the sea?" What awful thing did I mean? Belief in mermaids?) It seemed to Martin he had offended some of the good Frenchmen too—both the second engineer and the third mate stern to him, curiously more formal: La Mer Morte, a sea that comes following a day of high wind when the wind has dropped, leaving behind the great dead swell of the day before: hangover within and without.

POSITION REPORT

S.S. Diderot
Date: 5 Dec. 1947
Latitude: 27° 24′ N.
Longitude: 54° 90′ W.
Course: Rv. 45
Distance: 230 m.
To go: 2,553 m.
Length of Day: 23H. 40M.
Average Speed: 9nds 7
Wind: N. 6
Sea: Houleuse, du vent
Signed: Ch. Gachet 1st Lieut.

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Two squalls: cobalt thunderstorms. Wind catches spray and blows it across the sea like rain, a tiny squall of rain.

Martin was gloomy and savage, lying all day in his bunk predicting death and disaster.

During these last days, since going through the Anegada Passage, have been through some important spiritual passage too—what does it mean?

Afternoon squall hit suddenly with a million hammers. The ship shakes, shudders. The sea is white, sparkling, sequined—it is over in a flash.

Terrific squall toward sunset. Thunder. Cobalt lightnings reveal a sizzling sea... *vision of creation.*

For some reason this made Martin happy. He rose from his bunk and went down to dinner in a jovial mood. He even played games afterwards with the Mai's, Andrich and Gabriel.

—am glad to be welcomed by skipper again—really believe I have now got through some spiritual ordeal... though a little hard to see what.

*Dec. 6.* My mother's birthday. In getting out of bed this morning I seemed to be edging out of the table after dinner.

—utter forgetfulness whether one had gone to lavatory or not.

—finally one doesn't bother; for 5 whole days—result: a pain in back: no wonder: forgetfulness of teeth, hatred of teeth, continually muttering little phrases like—I wonder... couldn't have been as if...

—Tragedy of someone who got out of England to put a few thousand miles of ocean between himself and the non-creative bully-boys and homosapient schoolmasters of English literature only to find them so firmly entrenched in ever greater power within America by the time he arrived (Martin thinks), and responsible for exactly the same dictatorship of opinion, an opinion that is not based on shared personal or felt experience or identity with a given writer, or love of literature, or even any intrinsic knowledge of *writing*, and is not even formed independently, but is entirely a matter of cliques who have the auxiliary object of nipping in the bud any competitive flowering of contemporary and original genius, which however they wouldn't recognize if they saw

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it. What! A person like myself—Martin went on to write—who discovered Kafka for himself nearly 20 years ago, and Melville 25 years ago, when about 15, and went to sea at 17, becomes disgusted in a way not easy to explain. Kafka meant something spiritually to me then: no longer. Melville likewise: I find it almost impossible to share what they meant to me with these people. They have ruined these writers for me. In fact I have to forget that there is such a thing as so called "modern literature" and the "new criticizm" in order to get any of my old feeling and passion back. How can I help remembering that no fewer than seventeen years ago it was I myself who had to *point out* to one of the editors of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* that they actually *had* published Kafka's, *The Trial* On reading it—for no, of course he hadn't read it—the fellow said to me: "Did *you* write that book?" "What? Didn't you like it?" "Not much—the bar part was quite funny—but I got the feeling I was reading about *you*." (His boss made a play out of it fifteen years later.) Then again, fifteen years ago, I couldn't find a single book of Kierkegaard's in the New York Public Library save, *The Diary of a Seducer* (Some years later we found this book in the market in Matamoros, Guerera, Mexico.) Now he is all the rage and there is probably even a waiting list in the best sellers department for, *Fear and Trembling* And yet what right have these English junior housemasters of American literature to Kafka and Melville? Have they been to sea? Have they starved? Nonsense. They probably haven't ever even been drunk, or had an honest hangover. Nor did they even discover Kafka and Melville themselves... etc. etc.

A brilliant piece of scorn, thought Martin (who suffered slightly from paranoia) regarding what he had written, and with his mouth almost watering. Then he added:

Now you see how easy it is to be carried away by an impulse of hatred! There is some truth in what I say (that is, it is certainly true that I hate these people) but what of this whole thing, read aright? What a testimony to my own inadequacy, my selfishness, my complete confusion indeed! Worse than that. Suppose we take it to pieces, starting at the end, and see what our persistent objective self makes of such a thing. First

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it seems apparent that the writer feels that literature exists for his personal benefit, and that the object of life is to get drunk, to go to sea, and to starve. (As well it may be?) Moreover we feel sure that the writer wants us to know he has *had* many hangovers, *been* drunk very often, and *has* starved. (Though this last is doubtful because it is immediately qualified by the word Nonsense.) Certainly we must feel, if we read him aright, that he is a most unusually dog-in-the-manger sort of fellow, because for some undisclosed reason, among other things, he wishes to prevent the "English junior housemasters of American literature" from reading Kafka and Melville. Perhaps the writer wanted to be just such a curious junior housemaster himself, and failed (either in England, or in America, or even in both?) Mystery. Mystery too clothes the mention of *Fear and Trembling* and the *Diary of a Seducer* though that the author evidently feels himself to be singularly misused (to the extent that it even causes him to have some sort of mystical experience in the New York Public Library) at the same time feels himself to be some sort of unrecognized pioneer, who maybe even lives himself in a state of Fear and Trembling, perhaps even is undergoing some sort of Trial at the moment, seems manifest here too. And how proud he is of being mistaken in his youth for the author of *The Trial* though this little story looks like a lie. (Or does it? The little story in question is not a lie, Martin knows, the trouble is that he has told so many lies now he has become incapable of making the truth not look like a lie.)

—Alas, before we can arrive at any real view of the undoubted truth that seems shadowly contained in some of these damaging phrases, certain syntactical deficiencies in this first paragraph oblige us to question the writer's own "love of literature" (it looks as though it isn't very wide—perhaps he has only read the three books he mentions, though we may doubt even that)—we may wonder why, if he despises these schoolmasters so much he bothers himself about their "power", wonder too if he has not even secretly thought of himself as being "a noncreative bully-boy and homosapient schoolmaster," at which rate we may feel that it is no wonder if he has failed to put a thousand miles of ocean between him-

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self and himself (however schizophrenic) and come down finally to what seems to be the one undoubted unequivocal brute fact in the whole thing, which is that it looks indeed as though some sort of tragedy were involved.

What? Neurosis, of one kind and another, is stamped on almost every word he writes, both neurosis and a kind of fierce health. Perhaps his tragedy is that he is the one normal writer left on earth and it is this that adds to his isolation and so to his sense of guilt. (But without Primrose he wouldn't be a writer of any kind, or normal either.)

Just the same it is necessary for people to stand in judgement every now and then, and not allow themselves to be crippled by such smashing self-criticizm as the above, or all talent—though we note with a smile he called it genius—would be "nipped in the bud" and the world get nowhere. And this brought Martin to the business, the question rather, of equilibrium.

No one likes it (indeed it seems so intangible how can you discuss it?) and the people who recommend it, if one can so phrase it, are nearly always bastards who have never known what was more than enough anyway—(there Martin went again). And yet there has never been a time in history when there was a greater necessity for the preservation of that *seemingly most cold-blooded of all states, equilibrium*, a greater necessity indeed for sobriety (how I hate it!). Equilibrium, sobriety, moderation, wisdom: these unpopular and unpleasant virtues, without which meditation and even goodness are impossible, must somehow, because they are so unpleasant, be recommended as states of being to be embraced with a kind of passion, as indeed passions themselves, as the longing for goodness itself is a passion, and thus invested somehow with all the attractions and attributes of qualities rare and savage (though you personally can be as drunk as a cock on blackberry brandy for all I care, albeit your chances of equilibrium, unless you are a veritable Paracelsus, become increasingly fewer in that state). Without such equilibrium, be it then only mental, Martin thought, all reactions, public and personal, will tend to react too far. Whereas before we had sadism in literature, for instance, now an equal kindness, a

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distaste for cruelty in any shape or form will be evinced: but we shall not believe it presages a universal change in man, because this apparent kindness will be allied with other qualities in themselves dull or wicked,—albeit so far as cruelty is concerned this is one point upon which man should allow the pendulum to swing to its furthest reach of compassion for all God's creatures, human and animal, and there remain.

And yet one should be able passionately to impugn the wanton slaughter of wild creatures as something essentially cowardly, unworthy, contemptible and even suicidal without at the same time feeling bound in the same breath to attack your Hemingway; one should realize that your Hemingway has a right to shoot wild creatures and while he is engaged in that dubiously masculine occupation he is not, at least for the moment, shooting anyone else.

Bully-boys and schoolmasters now go to church, instead of Communist meetings, and obediently popular opinion follows, prayer book in hand. Into the church of myth go the other bloody lot—Oh shut up.

But the people really responsible for the spread of interest in Kierkegaard, stemming out of the interest in Kafka, for which they are equally to be thanked, Edwin and Willa Muir, the brilliant translators of Kafka, responsible by virtue of the preface to *The Castle*, have never received the credit. Since but for that preface Kierkegaard would no doubt have remained in oblivion, and the bully-boys and—Oh shut up. Shut up. Shut up.

When Martin starts to study French, after a difficult period of abstinence, but still with a hangover, he is confronted, to say the least, in his French grammer, with the following phrases:

*Traduisez en français:*

1. The man was not dead but his wife told him that he had died two days ago.

2. She dressed herself as the Goddess of Death.

3. She opened the door and offered to the drunkard a dinner that was not very appetising—(all this stemming from a lecture on the page headed *L'Ivrogne Incorrigible*... and beginning, *Un homme revenait tous les soirs à la maison dans un*

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*état d'ivresse complet*—below this was a photo of La Bourse, Paris, taken circa 1900.)

4. You must suffer for your vice, said she. I shall come each day to bring you the same meal.

5. The meal does not matter, but I am suffering from thirst, you must come every hour to bring me 3 glasses of wine—On the back of this rusty-colored book an embossed cock (perhaps the one I mentioned earlier as being drunk on blackberry brandy) greeting the dawn, beneath it the words: *Je t'adore, ô soleil,* in gilt letters... *What does this portend?*

Kindly remark of Lorca's: I 'd like to pour a river of blood on her head.

*Dec. 9.* Bloody weather! Slow, dark daylight. The *salle-à manger,* is depressing, porthole covers down and electric lights going at noon, and noisy, with sea thundering tons of water across foredeck.

The poor little Mai's, who've huddled, arms entwined, on deck, chattering like little gibbons, are now sad and sick; they could not eat lunch and finally all lay down on bench behind table.

Only Gabriel is still gay: "I have been eating 5, 6 and 8 because I am always hungry when the sea is bad."

Crash! Coffee, milk, etc. falls into Primrose's lap and on floor. I fear she will be scalded (she was too) but she is wailing because her pretty new red corduroy slacks are stained.

Godawful storm is on the wing (a good line) unless I have been a seaman for nothing. As a matter of fact I was a seaman for almost nothing, as wages go these days.

*King Storm whose Sheen is Fearful.*

Huge seas, snow-capped mountains, but a south wind *en arrière* so that the sea is following us; the Diderot riding it wonderfully (but rolling so everything in cabin is banging about) like a Nathaniel Hawthorne blowing along in the wind to see the devil in manuscript, or windjammer running before the wind: passed another Liberty Ship, going in the opposite direction, pitching way up in the skies, could not be making more than 20 miles per day.

Our rescue ship—coming to meet us.

The crew, in oilskins and sou'westers, battling the driving

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rain and wind, stretch lifelines on the after deck, terrific seas beyond and astern. Beyond and astern of time.

At sunset, tremendous sight of sprays and seas breaking over ship, black smoke pouring out of galley chimney straight to babord shows, however, that wind has gone to west...

*Dec. 10.* Gale increasing. And in fact what we seem in for is one of those good old Conradian South-westerlies, dreaded by sailors, first read about at school by torchlight, where the moon, sun and stars disappear for 7 days, and oneself finally beneath the blankets.

Primrose says: well, this is the Atlantic, the Western Ocean as I always imagined it.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the elements.

Low, wild sky with now and then a muted sun; gray, gray sea with a huge roll, (*grosse houle*) but confused and breaking in every direction, some waves breaking like combers on a beach with a crash, with curving snowy crests from which the wind lifts the spray like a fountain. Some waves collide, rising to jagged peaks high above the ship, where the top breaks, and even spouts. Most weirdly beautiful of all, once in a long time a light comes through the top: beneath the spray appears a pale luminous brilliant green like phosphorescence, as though the wave were lighted from within by a green flame.

Standing on the *passerelle*, Charles tells us the wind was Force 8 at 1 A.M. but has now dropped a little. There is a bad storm ahead all right but travelling faster than we are. We are making 11 knots.

*Later*, near sunset, the wind has risen, is still rising, and radio reports it is shifting to a southwesterly quarter. The radio operator and the 3rd engineer, on *passerelle* with us, obviously don't like it and mutter together, predicting a dirty night.

They have posted an extra lookout on the bridge.

Gabriel points to the #3 hatch just below, over which waves are constantly breaking (they are almost

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breaking over the bridge) and says: "Flour! But ze cover eez waterproof." "Why?" says Primrose. "What does he mean?"

The Commandant scampers up and looks round: "She isn't rolling—not too much. A good ship, eh?" Good, fine, we say, and he is pleased.

*Le vent chant dans le cordage.*

*Later.* The wind is now Force 9 and still rising, also has shifted, and is abeam. Wind flickering the spray like smoke along the face of the water. We are making 9 knots.

Rilke comes to Martin's aid, via *The Kenyon Review*: "The experience with Rodin has made me very timid toward all changing, all diminishing, all failure—for those unapparent fatalities, once one has recognized them, can be endured only so long as one is capable of expressing them with the same force with which God allows them. I am not very far off work, perhaps, but Heaven forbid that I should be called upon (right away at least) for insight into anything more painful than I was charged with in Malte Laurid. Then it will just be a howl among howls and not worth the effort..." But Martin has not, as a matter of fact, read a line of Rilke, and the whole thing, on his part, is simply an illusion of grandeur.

And, "Things must become different with us, from the ground up, from the ground up, otherwise all the miracles in the world will be in vain. For here I see once more how much is lavished on me and just plain lost. The Blessed Angela had a similar experience—'*quand tous les sages du monde,*' she says, '*et tous les saints du paradis m'acablereraient de leurs consolations et de leur promesses, et Dieu lui-même, de ses dons, s'il ne me changeait pas moi-même, s'il ne commençait au fond de moi une nouvelle operation, au lieu de me faire du bien, les sages, les saints et Dieu exaspéraient au delà de toute expression mon désespoir, ma fureur, ma tristesse, ma douleur, et mon aveuglement!*' This (says Rilke) I marked a year ago in the book, for I understand it with all my heart and I cannot help it, it has since become only the more valid..."

Frère JACQUES—Frère JACQUES—

Sonnez les MATINES! Sonnez les MATINES!

*Dec. 11.* Gale still worse. Poor Salvadoreans and Dutchmen stuck in their cabins on after deck: seas breaking right over:

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they can't get to *salle-à-manger*. Try to help but turns out couldn't matter less, they are all seasick and it's impossible to eat anyhow with dishes jumping off table on to floor—nearly impossible to drink too, should one want to: have to brace back against wall, clutch bottle in one hand and glass in other and pour teaspoonful at a time, for Primrose too. Have to write standing up too.

## STORM OVER ATLANTIS

Martin had a dream of seeing mad pictures of Bosch, in Rotterdam. Probably I have seen them somewhere, or reproductions of them, particularly the dreadful St. Christopher. Real dream was preceded by a vision of a gigantic cinema, also apparently in Rotterdam, otherwise catastrophic ruin, a great queer slim tower, at the top of which church bells were ringing ceaselessly.

Then barrel organs as big as shops, and cranked with the kind of energy one associates with a coal trimmer, i.e., myself, winding up ashes from the stokehold on a winch... I once knew a man, who in thus dumping the ashes overboard, went overboard himself with the ashcan. That chap not unlike me either.

Then the St. Christopher, carrying Christ on his back, and a fish in his right hand, a dog barking on the opposite bank, old women, cocks, and a sort of gnome house up a tree where the gnome has hung up washing in near background, someone enthusiastically hanging a bear on the other side of another kind of river, with a background of castles, old Rotterdam, etc. (will we make it?) but rather modern; some sort of naked fiend apparently dancing by his clothes, preparing to bathe from the river bank—the general effect one of the inerrable horror, and Satanic humour. But why should Martin be dreaming about it? perhaps clairvoyant—

### The Beast

—The abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place.

But the Bosch picture of most importance to La Mordida I might describe as follows: in the foreground there is the

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same detailed figure, to whom I will return: in the background is a house, with some rafters missing from the roof, panes missing in the windows, etc., but giving a sense of even greater inerrable evil and horror and at the same time poverty and utter debauchery: in the doorway a man and a woman are discussing some matter that one knows is gruesome and terrible, without being able to say quite why: on the right of this house, which also on examination shows some signs of having been recently partially burned, an old man is peeing lustily: to return to the figure in the foreground: he has the air of a pilgrim, his goods slung over his shoulder, cadaverous he is likewise, and one leg is bandaged (like Death in my other dream): up a rather nice looking tree between him and the man peeing are various objects that turn out upon close inspection to be demons of one sort and another, the most remarkable being an extremely wide, cat-like of visage, yet seemingly bodiless creature a bit like the Cheshire Cat in the illustrations to Lewis Carrol. This should occur in La Mordida in Trumbaugh's dream: for the meaning of this horror—a horror this time almost without humor unless it is the pissing man—is indeed that of the Pilgrim—even Bunyon's if you like, though the imagery is far more deeply religious, the man in the foreground in fact is the Protagonist, turning his face from damnation, as he thinks, and limping off into the unknown, and leaving his poor house, though he is making a great mistake as it happens, for his poor house was his salvation—like an image of his niche in the next world he was presented with in advance—and his business was to purify it and rebuild it, before setting forth... To hell with this... I think the trouble with Martin is that Heironymous Bosch is literally the only painter he can appreciate at all, and at that not much, because he seems vaguely to recognize—well, whatever it is he does recognize, poor devil. Or was it because he was a pre-Adamite?

—What I'm really getting at with Martin, is to try and plot his position of isolation, not merely in society, but from all other artists of his generation. Though an Englishman perhaps, in reality he belongs to an older tradition of writers, not English at all, but American, the tradition of Jamesian integri-

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ty and chivalry, of which Faulkner and Aiken, say—though both Southerners, which raises other questions—are about the last living exponents, albeit their subject matter might sometimes have scared their elders. However, Martin is quite incapable of their kind of chivalry and tolerance towards writers of that same generation, of whose souls the cover on Esquire might be considered the outward semblances, and who tend to divide mankind into two categories (a) those who are regular, (b) the sons of bitches, the bloody bully boys who—

Bah, but what I mean is something like this. I am capable of conceiving of a writer today, even intrinsically a first-rate writer, who *simply cannot understand*, and never has been able to understand, what his fellow writers are driving at, and have been driving at, and who has always been too shy to ask. This writer feels this deficiency in himself to the point of anguish. Essentially a humble fellow, he has tried his hardest all his life to understand (though maybe still not hard enough) so that his room is full of *Partisan Review's*, *Kenyon Review's*, *Minotaur's*, *Poetry* mags, *Horizon's*, even old *Dial's*, of whose contents he is able to make out precisely nothing, save where an occasional contribution of his own, years and years ago, rings a faint bell in his mind, a bell that is growing ever fainter, because to tell the truth he can no longer understand his own early work either. Yet he still tries, for the hundredth thousandth time to grasp *The Love Song* of Alfred Prufrock, for the nine millionth time to grapple with *The Waste Land*, of which the first line—though he knows it by heart of course!—is still as obscure to him as ever, and in which he had never been able to understand why Christ should have been compared to a tiger, though this has caused him to read William Blake (he had really been drawn to William Blake in childhood because he'd read in his father's London *Times* that Blake was cuckoo) whose poem about the little lamb is perhaps the only thing in all literature that he has thoroughly grasped, and even in that case maybe he's fooling himself. I am partly joking, for in fact my writer has a thorough grounding in Shakespeare. H'm. Anyhow, when he really faces up to matters, he finds his taste has been formed not necessarily by things that he has liked, but by things that he has understood, or rather these are so

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pitifully few that he has come to identify the two. Is this a fantastic portrait? Because it isn't that this man is not creative, it is because he *is* so creative that he can't understand anything; for example, he has never been able to follow the plot of even the simplest movie because he is so susceptible to the faintest stimulus of that kind that ten other movies are going on in his head while he is watching it. And it is the same way with music, painting, etc. At the age of 37, having acquired a spurious fame for various pieces that as I say, he has long ceased to understand himself, he wakes up to the fact that he has really only enjoyed with aesthetic detachment four things in his life. A poem by Conrad Aiken, a performance of *Richard II* when he was 10 years old at the Birkenhead Hippodrome, a gramophone record of Frankie Trumbauer's with Eddie Lang, Venuti and Beiderbeck, and a French film directed by Zilke (rhymes with Rilke?) called the *Tragedy of a Duck*. Despite this, he still heroically reads a few pages of William Empson's, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, each night before going to sleep, just to keep his hand in, as it were, and to keep up with the times...

There is a truth contained in this portrait, for this man, while a genuine artist—in fact he probably thinks of nothing but art—is yet, unlike most artists, a true human being. For alas this is the way the majority of human beings see other human beings, as shadows, themselves the only reality. It is true these shadows are often menacing, or they are angelic, love may move them, but they are essentially shadows, or forces, and the novelist's touch is missing in their human perception. Nothing indeed can be more unlike the actual experience of life than the average novelist's realistic portrait of a character. Nonetheless Martin's blindness, isolation, anguish, is all for a reason. I can see that on that road to Damascus, when the scales drop from his eyes, he will be given the grace to understand the heroic strivings of other artists too. Meantime he must slug it out, as they say, in darkness, that being his penance.

(Note: it must be said somewhere that Martin had been on this planet for so long that he had almost tricked himself into believing he was a human being. But this he felt with his

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deeper self not to be so, or only partly so. He could not find his vision of the world in any books. He had never succeeded in discovering more than a superficial aspect of his sufferings or his aspirations. And though he had got into the habit of pretending that he thought like other people, this was not the case. It is thought that we made a great advance when we discovered that the world was round and not flat. But to Martin it was flat all right, but only a little bit of it, the arena of his own sufferings, would appear at a time. Nor could he visualize the thing going round, moving from west to east. He would view the great dipper as one might view an illuminated advertisement, as something fixed, although with childish wonder, and with thoughts in mind of his mother's diamonds. But he could not make anything move. The world would not be wheeling, nor the stars in their courses. Or when the sun came up over the hill in the morning, that was precisely what it did. He was non-human, subservient to different laws, even if upon the surface he was at best a good-looking normal young man with rather formal manners. How else explain the continual painful conflict that went on between him and reality, even him and his clothes. "There is a continuous cold war between me and my clothes." Like a man who has been brought up by apes, or among cannibals, he had acquired certain of their habits, he looked like a man, but there the resemblance ended. And if he shared some of their passions, he shared these equally with the animals. Describe The Getting Up of Martin Trumbaugh, in the complications, futility, complications with clothes, reality, etc. And yet, also, in his deepest self, he possessed aspirations that were neither animal, nor, alas, any too commonly human. He wished to be physically strong, not in order to defeat people, but in order to be more practically compassionate. Compassion he valued above all things even though he saw the weakness in that desire. In fact anybody who said anything like this would immediately seem to be condemned for some sort of hypocrisy in his eyes just as he felt himself condemned at that moment. That weakness of self-pity he wished to correct too. He valued courtesy, tact, humor. But he wanted to find out how these could be put into practise in an un-

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corrupted form. But above all he valued loyalty—or something like loyalty, though in an extreme form—loyalty to oneself, loyalty to those one loved. Above all things perhaps he wanted to be loyal to Primrose in life. But he wanted to be loyal to her beyond life, and in whatever life there might be beyond. He wanted to be loyal to her beyond death. In short, at the bottom of his chaos of a nature, he worshipped the virtues that the world seems long since to have dismissed as dull or simply good business or as not pertaining to reality at all. So that, as in his lower, so in his higher nature too, he felt himself to be non-human. And he was in general so tripped up by the complexities of his own nature that too often he exhibited no virtues whatsoever, and all the vices, once glaring but now obscure; sins, that for all her victory, Protestantism is responsible for rendering less deadly than they in fact are. And he had good cause—)

Another dream of a huge desolate cathedral, yet involved marvelously with life, *pissoirs* underneath it, shops living within its very architecture, the great unseen triptychs of Rubens in the gloom, and the gigantic tinkling of a huge bell... the peace, and the distant bowed priests in white, carrying ingots.

The wireless operator praying lonely in the church: and I too, am he.

—Delirium of sea under moon—

*Dec. 11.* Night

Al stereless within a boot am I
Amid the sea, betwexen windes two
That in contrarie standen evermo

Chaucer's comment is to be taken seriously: something has gone west in our steering gear. That is what I think at least, though I can gain no information and to my humiliation I have no knowledge of the hydraulic contraption we're dependent on. But the ship did not answer her helm from the upper bridge earlier, and there is something evilly wrong. Nearly all hands seem working down below, and I suspect the

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second mate of having gone down the propellor shaft, which is a bad sign... Al stereless within a stormboot are we.

—Tonight, in a full gale, off the Azores, our cabin —the Chief Gunner's being on the lee side—and the wind from the southwest, with tremendous seas, but being driven down wind, it was possible to leave our porthole wide open, through which one could see, as the ship lurched down to leeward, great Doctor of Divinity's gowns of seas furling to leeward, the foam like lamb's wool: the wind rose to a pitch of wailing in the cordage so extreme that it sounded almost false, like movie wind about a haunted house: and indeed the whole ship sounded like an immense exaggeration of the same thing: clankings of chains, unearthly chimes, inexplicable tinkerings, clinkings and chattering and sudden horrid whistlings; from down below in the engines, there issued an unimaginable noise of battering, whistling and thumping, accompanied too, for whatever reason, and at regular intervals, and as if were concealed down there some of mystic Ahab's secret harpooners engaged in forging their weapons, a tremendous sound of hammering that always ceased after a while, and doubtless was concerned some way with the propellor but so fearsome that I could explain it to Primrose only by saying that indeed it was the custom during gales for the chief engineer to keep his intransigent greasers employed in chipping rust, (she didn't believe me but nodded gravely) that they might not become discouraged or bored and lose their nerve: on top of this, and also at regular intervals, there was the noise that seemed to come out of the wall between myself and the wireless operator's cabin, as of a jack being cranked up, which Sacheverell Sitwell has taught us to associate with the signing off or evening greeting of a poltergeist. Beneath one, lying in the bunk, when this was possible, the ship squirmed and twisted, at moments of crisis, like a woman in an agony of

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pleasure, and looking out at the storm, and observing the gigantic seas, rising all above us as if we were in a volcano, it seemed impossible the ship could survive the punishment she was receiving; horrible detractable noises too came from the closed galley two decks below where that day the cook had been badly burned: and yet the sea never visited us through the porthole, we were safe in the midst of chaos, the wind rose to a howl of wolves as we plunged on, leaving me not merely a feeling that it was impossible to be experiencing this but, at every moment, the feeling that one had not experienced it at all.

The supernatural motion is retarded; the Mariner awakes and his penance begins anew.

We have had to change our course, the Skipper says, and are going by dead reckoning.

—Mad game of chess with Skipper in his cabin: tables and chairs are mostly anchored to deck (nearly said floor) other chairs etc. and so on are lashed, so the cabin resembles escapologist's "rumpus" room—how I hate that phrase!—everything goes over from time to time anyhow: giacomo piano opening: chessmen peg into board like cribbage board—bottle of whiskey in Skipper's furred sea-boot beside table, because sea-boot won't fall over, is for me, he scarcely touches it; this chess is his idea of an hour's relaxation instead of sleep—he has summoned me to play in the middle of the night as if I were a mediaeval courtier subject to the King's wishes: dash to the chartroom something like one of those dashes, when scrum half on opponent's twenty-five, over the try-line—opposing XV in this case being not human beings but objects, fortunately static: wireless operator hasn't turned in for three days, looks half dead, poor fellow, keeps fighting uphill into Skipper's cabin every now and then with idiotic reports of fine weather and light winds in the Baltic, meantime the scene outside, when I can see it, is like a descent into the maelstrom. Other, more serious radio reports, to the Skipper's sardonic amusement, are always accompanied by some such remark as "These reports

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have nothing to do with navigation." We are evidently in a bad way though Skipper has no intention of telling me what is wrong, or at least not yet; anyhow we can't hear ourselves speak. Skipper looks damned grave, however; despite which, after a long game, he beats me very decisively. Grisette, the little cat, is delighted with all these escapologist's arrangements, "for her benefit." I was so concentrated on the game that I forgot to look on the bridge, which seemed unnaturally dark, to see if there was a man at the wheel. However I tell Primrose that there was. But so help me God, I don't think there was.

—Game of chess now seems to me utterly unreal and something like that eerie wonderful absurd scene in the French movie by Epstein of *The Fall of the House of Usher* in which Roderick Usher and the old doctor are reading by the fire, the house has already caught fire, not only that but cracks are opening in the walls and the house is in fact coming to pieces all around them, while flames creep toward them along the carpet, and insane electric storm moreover is discharging its lightnings outside in the swamp, through which Mrs. Usher, *née* Ligeia, having just risen from the grave, is making her way back to the house with some difficulty; nonetheless, absorbed in the story, Usher and the good doctor go on reading: the unspeakably happy ending of that film, by the way, Martin thought, under the stars, with Orion suddenly turned into the cross, and Usher reconciled with his wife in this life yet on another plane, was a stroke of genius perhaps beyond Poe himself, and now it occurs to me that something like that should be the ending of the novel....

Roderick Usher rose at six
And found his house in a hell of a fix.
He made the coffee and locked the door,
And then said, what have I done that for?
But had poured himself a hell of a snort
Before he could make any kind of retort,
And poured himself a jigger of rum
Before he heard the familiar hum
Of his matutinal delirium

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Whose voices, imperious as a rule,
Were sharper today, as if at school:
Today, young Usher, you're going to vote.
Said Roderick, that's a hell of a note.
So he packed his bag full of vintage rare,
His house fell down but he didn't care,
And took the 9:30 to Baltimore
And was murdered, promptly, at half past four.

—Three flying Dutchmen.

*Later.* In vain attempt to get some information I am informed by the fourth mate—the sort of information I might have given myself in a similar situation—that all hands are engaged in putting a *ceinture* around the ship to prevent it falling apart. (Indeed this is not so funny as it sounded—get from newspaper cuttings Pat Terry's story of the ship that used chains in this regard: also it is an electric welded ship; danger of breaking in two or cracking hull very real.)

Charles says, smiling, "These Liberty Ships, you know, Sigbjørn, they all fell in two in the Atlantic, in the war." Then, seeing Primrose's face he added, "Do not worry, Madame, we have put a *ceinture* around its middle."

*Later.*—My sailor's instincts tell me, all of a sudden—and it is amazing with what suddenness such a crisis is upon one—that it will actually be an unusual bloody miracle if we pull through. The worst is being able to do nothing. Worse still, can't tell what they're doing, or if they think they are doing anything, what they imagine it can be. Despite the fourth mate's joke, there is an actual sound as of the ship breaking up. On an old type of ship such as I knew, if the steering gear went, there was still an old fashioned windjammer wheel on the poop that could go into direct action. On top of that—believe it or not—even as late as 1927, we carried sails on board: and the lamptrimmer, one of the petty officers, and a rating they seem to have no longer, corresponded to the old sailmaker. Here there is no windjammer-like wheel, and as certainly there are no sails. But there are two wheels, one above the other, on the upper and lower bridge, and so far as I can gather, both of these are out of commission. Yet we still have

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steerage way, of a kind, and are not hove to. The thing to be thankful for is that we haven't lost our propellor. Yet.

—Martin took his ignorance of the nature of the crisis to heart, telling himself that it was because these Liberty Ships were not like the old ships where you could see what was going on, that there was an almost Kafka-like occlusion, everything closed, ghastly, so that in the Chief Gunner's cabin, while it connected with the bridge, you might as well have been hidden away on the upper deck of one of the Fall River Line Paddlesteamers for all that you were in contact: but no matter what he told himself, it seemed all part and parcel of his wider isolation, and in fact like the ultimate ordeal of Primrose is assured, whenever she washes up against anyone, that everything is all right and there's nothing to worry about. She can't possibly be fooled but pretends she is. She's a good sailor, spends her time eating sandwiches, for there's been no hot food for two days, and watching the storm from the lower bridge. What else to do? Can't get into bunk or you're thrown out. The poor Salvadoreans, the Hungarian sportsman, and the Mynheer Peeperhorns are all half dead of seasickness and there is nothing anyone can do to help them. Our store of liquor, however, takes on a dimension of social utility for once. Second mate reports all lifeboats to starboard smashed. You'd think one would notice this, but somehow one didn't. One lifeboat to port is still possible—*Côté à l'Abri du vent*... etc. While wheel is functioning again on the lower bridge.

*Later.* The wind is now 100 miles an hour. Seems unbelievable but I've forgotten whether this is force 10 or 12. Wireless weather report: overcast sky, some rain.

*Dec. 12. Position Report.* S.S. Diderot. There is no position report. (As Stephen Leacock would say.)

*Dec. 13.* 3 A.M. Wind is now force 10–11. On lower bridge with Primose and Commandant, who says to Primrose, laughing:

"Well, there is now nothing I can do. But if you like, Madame, you can pray."

—The storm, paralyzing scene from bridge, of the ship in anguish shipping sea after sea of white drifting fire, after each

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smash the spume smoking mast high above the foremasthead light.

*Later.* We have now had no sleep for 2 nights—I think it has been 2 nights—impossible to lie down, or even sit down. We stand, bracing ourselves and holding on. This desk thank God is strongly anchored, so I hang on with one hand to desk, write with other. Hope I can read this scrawl later. Primrose spends most of her time on lower bridge. I know she is frightened but she won't say so. She comes staggering in every so often to reassure me, or give latest report. Primrose...

She tells me: everyone is on duty except 1st mate, who is asleep! Skipper sends man to wake him. Impossible. Finally Skipper himself stamps down in a rage. They shout and shake him, but, says André, "He was like a dead corpse."

Absolute blackness and wild water all round. Our rudder trouble has started all over again. Uncanny scene of completely useless wheel in bridgehouse spinning round, with the ship going like a bat out of hell. Or did I dream it?

Ship seems to jump out of water, shudder from end to end.

Sonnez les matines!

Sonnez les matines!

Back in Chief Gunner's cabin I remember Gerald once saying, "when in doubt make a memorandum." So I do... Death compared to a rejected manuscript. Am my grandfather's son, who went down with ship—do I have to do that? Ship not mine anyhow... Seems unnecessary. Would be downright awkward, in fact. Embarrassment of Skipper. A short story: The Last Aperitif.

Martin reflected that these kind of idiotic thoughts were simply a mechanism in forced inaction to short-circuit anxiety about Primrose. This anxiety, when one gives way a bit, seems less anxiety than an inoculation against intolerable and appalling grief, a grief indeed that seems exactly like this sea...

Primrose, laughing, manages to shout to me: "Do you know, I just had the most idiotic thought, if we have to take to the lifeboat I mustn't wear my beautiful fur coat—I don't want to ruin it!"

But, as a matter of fact, there are now no lifeboats.

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No use trying to get into bunk,—we are pitched out on the floor.

Another way of confronting death is conceive of it as a Mexican Immigration Inspector: "Hullo. What's the matter with you, you look as though you'd swallowed Pat Murphy's goat and the horns were sticking out of your arse."

(That is what the Manx fisherman admirably observed to the Skipper of the liner, who not only nearly ran his boat down, but started yelling at him apoplectically for not keeping out of his way. So I tell Primrose this story which diverts her a lot. In fact, it is enough to make God laugh, that story, I always think. Possibly something like this anecdote—which I had from a Manx fisherman—is the origin of someone's threat—Bildad's?—in Moby Dick: "I'll swallow a live goat, hair and horns and all.")

Our house. Incredible jewel-like days in December sometimes. Such radiance for December. Celestial views. Then a bell ringing in the mist. Would like someone to have it, live in it, without fear of eviction.

—Thou god of this great vast, rebuke these surges
Which wash both Heaven and Hell: the seaman's whistle
Is as a whisper in the ears of death,
Unheard.

But one should be grateful that there are not *6 short* whispers followed by one *long* whisper.

In fact, as I surmise, many lives have been saved by the weather being too bad to abandon ship.

Sonnez les matines!

Sonnez les matines!

Three S.O.S. going at once. Radio next door crackling like small storm within a storm inside. Operator tells me—how many hours ago?—Costa Rican tanker has been sinking for three days. A Greek and a Finn also in distress. And now a Panamanian. Greek ship is called ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΗΣ just to give us our unities presumably, since Aristotle's personal destiny is not much help. (Note: Aristotle drowned himself.) We are all too far away from one another, all too far down the drain ourselves, to do any good. Still, it is a comfort to each

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other to know we are not alone. This is apparently one of the worst storms in living history in the Atlantic. Though messages still come through, "having nothing to do with navigation."

Ventilators singing in wild organ harmony: Hear Us, Oh Lord, From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place!

—No ship would stand many more seas like that—in old type of steamer half crew would be cut off in the fo'c'sle. Now it is the poor passengers, the Salvadoreans, etc. who are cut off.

Popular illusions to spike about French, officers and crew of this ship anyhow. (message in a bottle.)...

That they are predominantly homosexual. (There are seemingly none aboard this ship. Though a Frenchman is capable of living a balanced and even chivalrous life with a female giraffe, without inflicting it on you.)

That they are predominantly unfaithful to their wives. (There is one longing in common among all the married men, officers and sailors to whom I have spoken, to be home with their wives for Christmas. Though this may be a virtue peculiar to married sailors.)

That they are mean. (Your *concièrge* may be so. *Madame P.P.* is so.)

No matter what yoke they were reeling under, no matter how starved, I believe you would never see in France, or among Frenchmen, the appalling sights of despair and degradation to be met with daily in the streets of Vancouver, Canada, where man, having turned his back on nature, and having no heritage of beauty else, and no faith in a civilization where God has become an American washing machine, or a car he refuses even to drive properly—and not possessing the American *élan* which arises from a faith in the very act of taming Nature herself, because America having run out of a supply of nature to tame is turning on Canada, so that Canada feels herself at bay, while a Canadian might be described as a conservationist divided against himself—falls to pieces before your eyes. Report has nothing to do with navigation. Instead of ill this very extremity in Canada probably presages an important new birth of wisdom in that country, for which America herself will be grateful.

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That they are not good sailors. (Even Conrad, in his most whiskery mood, admitted in *The Rover* that they were among the best.)

That they have no, or a prissy, or a precise or merely urbane sense of humor. (Rabalais' "roaring arm chair" has never been vacated.)

Prosper Merimée writing on the Scots. And on the Americans placed at different tables on the Riviera (during the American Civil War) "to prevent them eating each other." Similar illusions should be spiked *re* Americans, English, Jews, Mexicans, Negroes, etc. etc. An example of humor to be appreciated in any language: Grisette is now in heat.

Greatest fault of the French is that they do not listen to what each other say. No wonder their governments fall—or rather they are talking so much all at once they can't even hear them fall, perhaps.

Prayer to the Virgin for those who have nobody them with.

For she is the Virgin for those who have nobody them with.

And for mariners on the sea.

And to the Saint of Desperate and Dangerous Causes.

For the 3 El Salvadoreans. For the 1 Hungarian sportsman. And for the 3 Mynheer von Peeperhorns.

Plight of an Englishman who is a Scotchman who is Norwegian who is a Canadian who is a negro at heart from Dahomey who is married to an American who is on a French ship in distress which has been built by Americans and who finds at last that he is a Mexican dreaming of the White Cliffs of Dover.

Mystical objection to changing one's religion. But let the whole world make a fresh start. A universal amnesty (extending even to the bullies, the Mexican Immigration inspectors, the schoolmasters, and finally myself, who have never lifted a finger to speak against the death in life all about me till this moment.) Society is too guilty in the eyes of God to hold any man permanently to account in a larger sense for a crime against it, no matter how wicked: collectively, who have always—these donkey, these man—done something worse.

The day in Bowen Island we found the bronze bells and saw the Harlequin ducks.

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Prayer for Einar Neilson, who saw us off, singing Shenandoah.

"And from the whole earth, as it spins through space, comes a sound of singing." (C.A.)

Sonnez les matines!

Sonnez les matines!

*¿Le gusta esta jardin? ¿Que es suyo?*

Vanity of human beings is terrific, stronger than fear, worse than that story in Schopenhauer.

S.O.S. going on next door. *Battement de tambours!*

God save the Fisher King.

Can't tell what's happening on deck at all. And there is absolutely nothing, for the moment, that can be done, which is never how you visualize it. Nevertheless, Martin reflected, this is a position all novelists find themselves in eventually. Put on your life jacket, your arms through the shoulder straps. Damned if I will. Couldn't if I tried. Have always had trouble with things like that. Put life jacket on Primrose, Martin thought. But Primrose, eating a sandwich, has already decided she wants to return to the bridge. So meanwhile we manage a drink. It is a rather good, strange drink.

*à ce signal:*

—Go to your cabin.

—Cover yourself warmly.

—Put on your gill-netting of *sauvetage*, and letting yourself be guided by the *personnel* render yourself at the Bridge of Embarcations, on the side secluded from the wind...

The signal of abandon... Couldn't hear it given in this noise.

*Chief Gunner's cabin.*

Martin swore that if he survived he would never willingly do another injurious action, or a generous one for an ulterior motive, unless that were an unselfish one. But the thing to do was *not to forget this*, like the character in William Marche's story, if you ever got out of the jam. God give me, he asks, a chance to be truly charitable. Let me know what it is You want me to do...

—Wish old Charon was here...

*The whole is an assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another—*

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Something like our steering gear in fact.
—law of series.
Sonnez les matines!
Sonnez les matines!
Miraculous such nights as these... etc.
Great God—we seem to be steering again.
The second mate says to Primrose, laughing, "All night we have been saving your life, Madame."
Dawn, and an albatross, bird of heaven, gliding astern.
*A 9nds. arrivée Bishop Light, Angleterre, le 17 Dec. vers 11 H.*
—S.S. Diderot, left Vancouver November 7—left Los Angeles November 15—for Rotterdam.

Frère Jacques
Frère Jacques
Dormez-vous?
Dormez-vous?
Sonnez les matines!
Sonnez les matines!
Ding dang dong!
Ding dang dong!

nd the An-
ent Mariner
cholded his
ative country
id to teach by
is own exam-
le, love and
verence to all
ings that God
ade and
veth.

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# MEN OF WAR

All down the coast
were regiments of jellyfish (men-of-war,
they often congregate at docks);
the last rough wave had cast them far ashore.
We stalked the sinister fortified beach,
armed with poking sticks and rocks,
At least one jagged edge to each.
They were a most

innocuous looking lot,
paralytic, dumb, like plastic puffballs
or long-discarded water wings
especially designed for children's dolls
(that resemblance which, of all, the most redeems),
trailing ultramarine threads
arbitrarily clinging at unfinished seams—
a product of botched

and sorry craftsmanship:
surely, we thought, they had been mass-produced.
Some warned us not to linger there
and told us tales of innocents seduced
by lurid flashing tentacles, then stricken
by a moment's contact with their stingers;
as a kite to the winds, its string broken,
to the savage sea-depths

would these fall prey
if they should lose their agile tentacles.
Lightly, we bore down on them
and thrust our quick pokers in their middles.
The short-lived puff that let their lives leak out
did not befit their martyrdom:
they perished with a pop not near as loud
nor as maddened, say,

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as popcorn boldly
springing to life in the pan. There was one
plaintive warrior more rueful than the others.
The hollow vessel fairly pulsed in the sun;
as he wobbled his labile snout in disdain
he brought a sudden halt to our maneuvers.
Perhaps, before, we had made mock in vain.
The easy victory

of the sand, the passive
undefended going of a famed fighting race
had been the theme of our derision.
Now, a shock to terminate in our disgrace:
so like a human heart was this
dyspeptic prostrate specimen;
even to a small dart defenceless,
the heart is no more impressive.

—LAWRENCE LIEBERMAN

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# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

## FICTION

**Max Steele** *(What To Do Till The Postman Comes)* won the Harpers Prize in 1950 with his novel, *Debby*. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina. He has lived in California, Mexico, New Orleans, and Paris where he became an advisory editor of THE PARIS REVIEW.

**Jan Gerhard Toonder** *(The Angels Come Too Seldom)* is a Dutch writer, author of nine novels published in his own country. This is his first appearance in English. The translation is his own, with the assistance of John Anthony West.

**Charles G. Finney** *(Turtles In The Grass Alas)* is the author of *The Circus of Dr. Lao*, which won the National Book Award in 1935 as the most original novel of the year. Other published novels include *The Unholy City* (1937) and *Past the End of the Pavement* (1939). He started writing again four years ago after a lapse of fourteen years.

## INTERVIEW

**George Wickes** and **Ray Frazer** are both assistant professors of English at the Associated Colleges of Claremont, California.

## PORTFOLIO

**Pierre Schneider** *(on Pierre Soulages)* has frequently contributed to THE PARIS REVIEW. He is the author of several books in French of which the latest, *L'Unique Source*, appeared last summer.

## CHRONICLE

**Harvey Breit** *(Malcolm Lowry)* was the co-author with Bud Schulberg of the Broadway hit, *The Disenchanted*. He was recently an editor of the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*. He is at present working on a second play.

**Malcolm Lowry** *(Through the Panama)* was born in Merseyside, England in 1909. In 1932 he graduated from Cambridge University and published his first novel, *Ultramarine*. His most widely known work, *Under the Volcano*, he rewrote twice over a period of several years and finally published in 1947. He voyaged frequently, often by sea, spending long intervals in the United States, Mexico, and British Columbia. From Canada, he sailed through the Panama Canal to England where he died in 1957.

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## POETRY

**Louis Simpson** *(Walt Whitman at Bear Mountain)* has published three books of verse, the last of which, *A Desert With a Name*, appeared in 1958. He has frequently contributed to THE PARIS REVIEW.

**Donald Petersen** *(Autumn Complaint)* has been published by the *Western Review* and elswhere. His poem, *Triptych*, appeared in THE PARIS REVIEW No. 22.

**Jenny Joseph** *(Birthday Poem)* who has published fiction and poems in *The London Magazine* and other English journals, recently returned to London after a year and a half in South Africa.

**William Stafford** *(What God Used For Eyes Before We Came)* lives in Oswego, Oregon. His verse has frequently appeared in the *Hudson Review*, *Saturday Review* and THE PARIS REVIEW.

**Richard Lyons** *(Landscape)* teaches at the North Dakota Agricultural College and lives in Fargo. Allan Swallow has published his first book of verse, *Men and Tin Kettles*. Mr. Lyons has also exhibited as a painter.

**Arthur Freeman** *(New England Mills)* has graduated from Harvard University where his poems appeared in *The Advocate*.

**Moore Moran** *(Horseman, 5:14)* works in a business in San Francisco. He has published in various quarterlies and the *Atlantic*.

**Paul Carroll** *(De Medici Slot Machine)* whose verse has appeared widely, teaches at the University of Chicago and is an editor of the *Chicago Review*.

**W. G. van Keuren** *(La Señora Norteamericana)* published verse in the the *Kenyon Review*, the *Hudson Review*, and *The New Yorker*. He died last year.

**Lawrence Lieberman** *(Men of War)* is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley.

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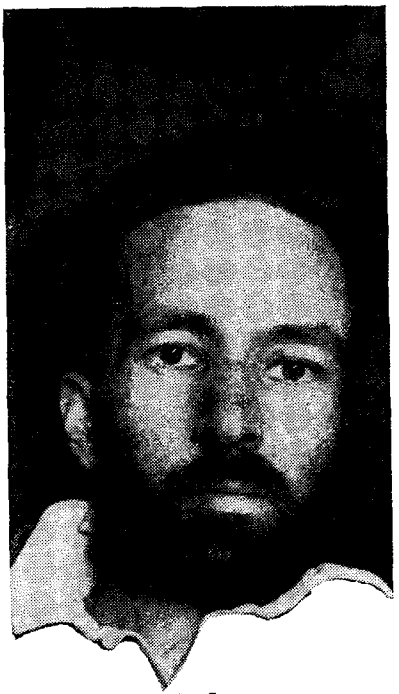

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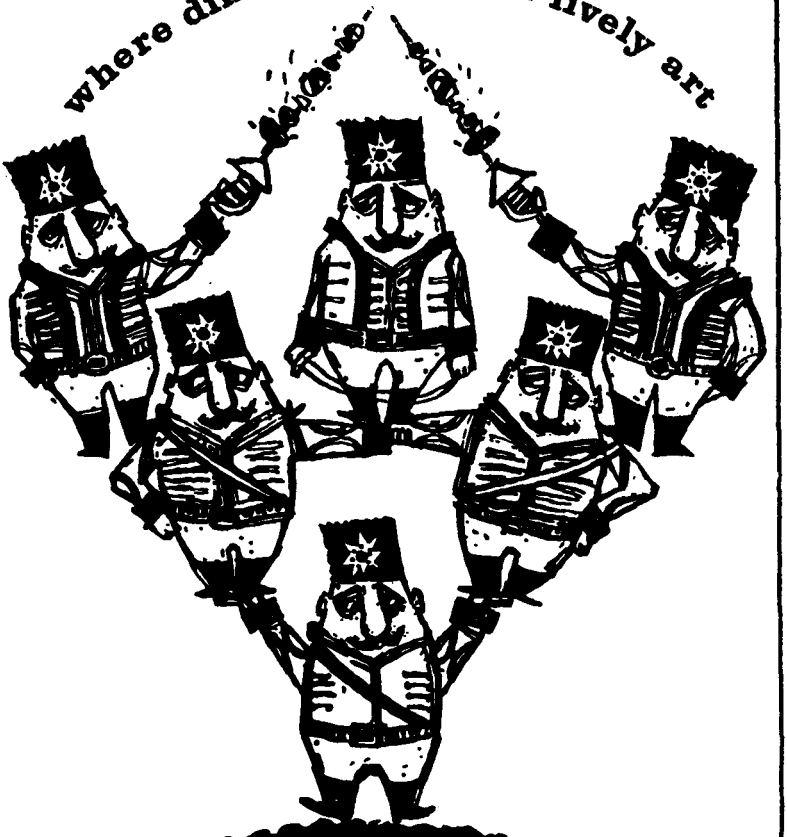

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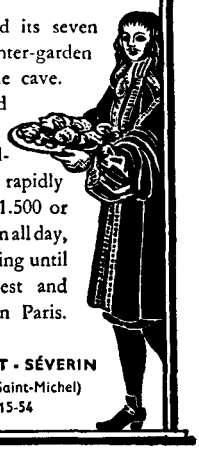

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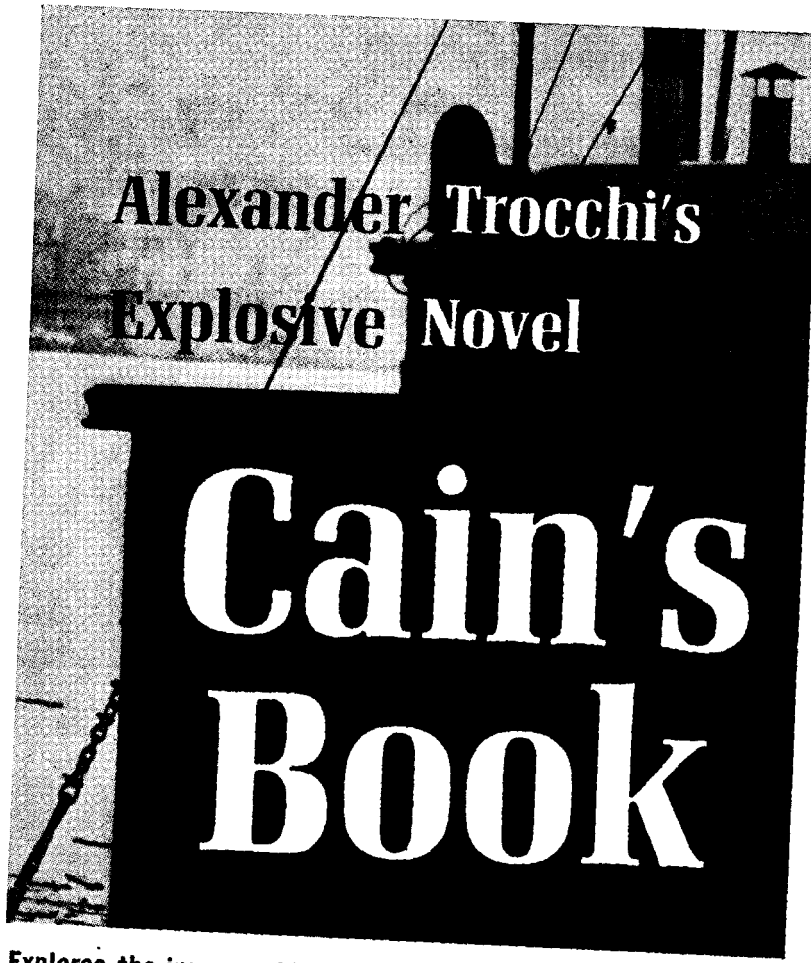


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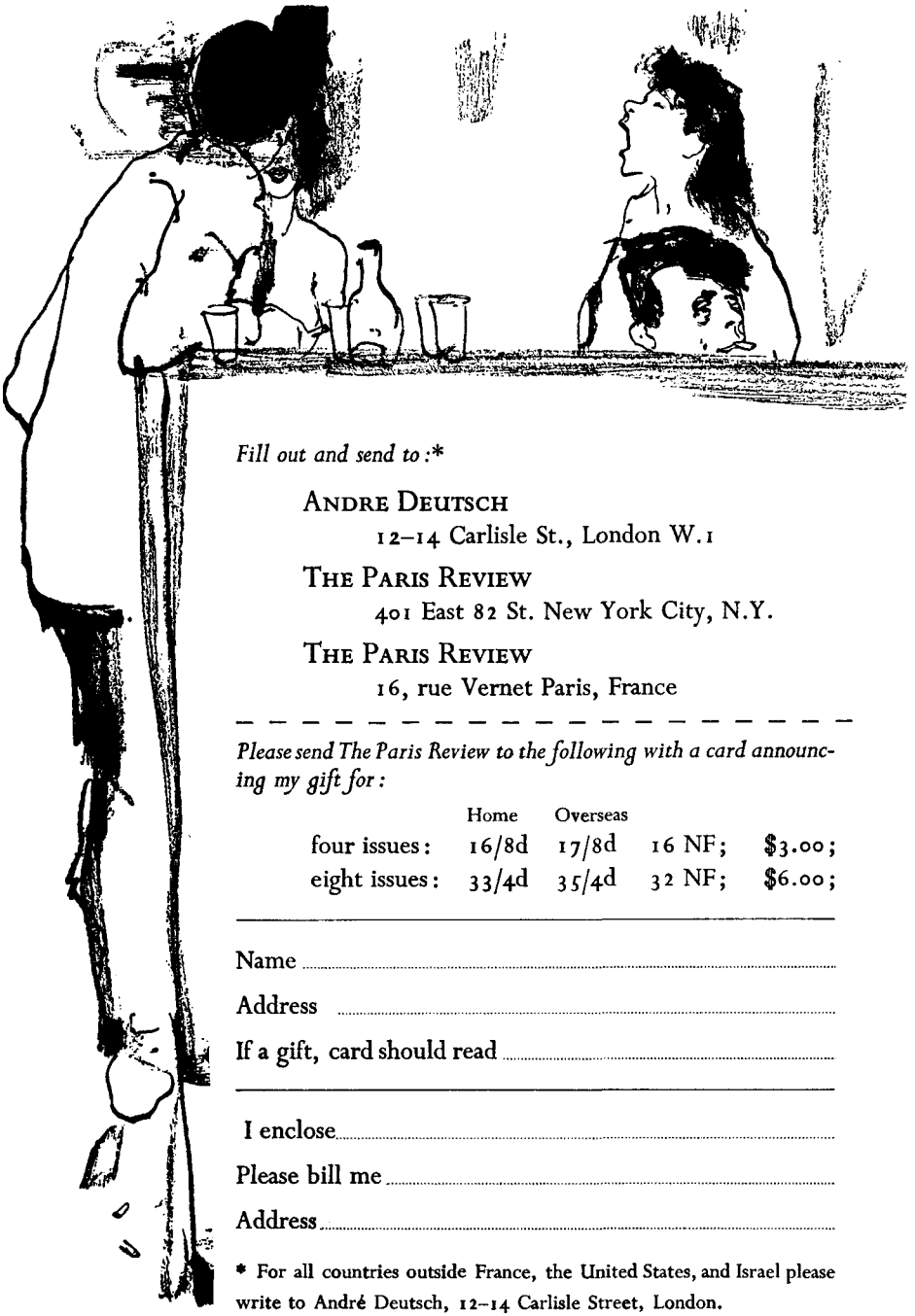

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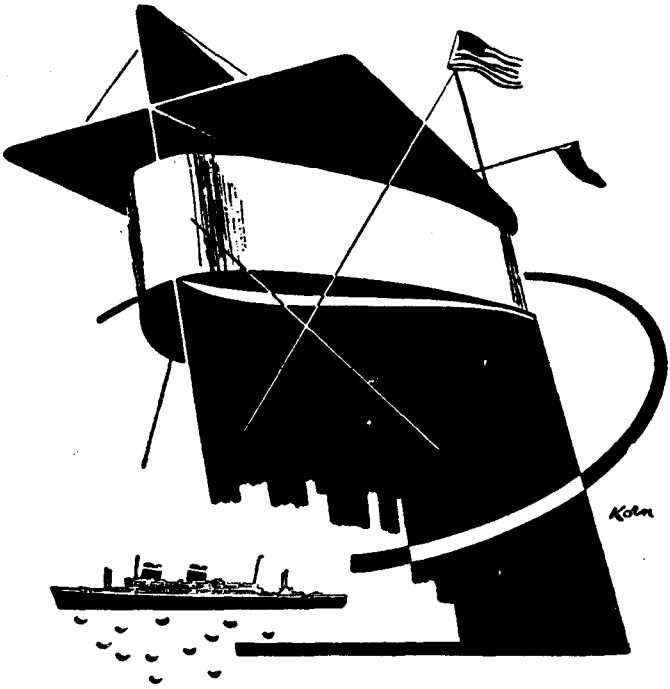


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